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Martha from the Margins

The Authority of Martha in Early Christian Tradition

*

ALLIE M. ERNST

BRILL

Martha from the Margins

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by
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To Dr Rick Strelan
in gratitude
and in memory of
Dr Paul Ernst

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PREFACE

> *. . . the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha you are worried and distracted by many things . . .'*
>
> *(Luke 10:41)*

The biblical Martha, as she is depicted by Luke, evokes for many the epitome of misplaced priorities or of misogyny, patronising her for being distracted with meal preparations even while such roles continue to be expected of women. It is not surprising that this Martha evokes an ambivalent response. Less well known is the Johannine Martha, who boldly confesses "the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world" (John 11:27). Besides these two canonical texts involving Martha (Luke 10:38–42 and John 11:1–12:2), there are a number of other intriguing references to Martha in early Christianity; texts which place her at the tomb of Jesus, include her among a group of women disciples of Jesus, or place her at the Last Supper. Origen even knows of a group alleged to be named after Martha (*C. Cels.* 5.62). While recent scholarship into the role and participation of women in early Christian communities has focused extensively on Mary Magdalene, re-reading the canonical texts in the light of apocryphal texts and retrieving Mary as a leader in the early Church, Martha has received considerably briefer attention. Moreover, studies of Martha have been limited predominantly to the canonical texts or to other segments of the tradition, such as gnostic texts. As a result the vision of Martha as she was known in the early Church has been limited and her significance underestimated.

The aim of this study is to offer a broader survey of Martha traditions that includes not only literary texts, but also documentary evidence, liturgical texts and images. Rich new patterns emerge. Martha appears predominantly at either tomb or table: as a woman engaged in 'serving' (διακονεῖν) or as a woman present at a tomb. In the latter case she appears not only at the tomb of Lazarus, but also at the tomb of Jesus and, more importantly, as one of the women who encounters the risen Jesus. These traditions naming Martha as myrrhophore and resurrection witness are neither unique nor extraordinary, but rather wide-spread and persistent, appearing in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt and Italy from the second to the sixth centuries and beyond. Insofar as can be determined from the texts and images themselves, there is little reason to assign the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore and Easter witness to 'heterodox' or marginal groups and good evidence to conclude that this is a widespread tradition among the early churches, a tradition which may be as ancient as some of the canonical Gospels. Moreover, Martha appears not simply as an adjunct in these texts and traditions. She takes a leading role—a role which has been overlooked or underestimated even by feminist scholars, who have tended to assume the primacy of Mary Magdalene among the myrrhophores. Yet the earliest extant evidence applies the title 'apostola apostolorum' not to the Magdalene but to Martha and Mary.

Martha is charged with a great deal of authority in some early Christian texts, to the point that she is called not only 'apostle to the apostles' but also 'a second Peter.' Some of these texts involving Martha also reveal struggles over the authority of women in leadership in the church, in particular at the Eucharist. Martha traditions prove a double-edged sword for women: they can be, and in some cases apparently were, used to support or to undermine women's authority in the church. Martha stories are open and flexible. In particular the canonical stories served a range of rhetorical uses. This too is part of the power and significance of Martha in early Christian tradition. To quote a phrase derived from the work of Levi-Strauss and popularised by Peter Brown, women are good "to think with" (Brown 1988: 153). Martha proves herself superb to think (and to argue) with, not only about matters of women and authority in the Church, but about a number of issues.

Modern biblical scholars tend to focus on the text and its literary context as the primary context of interpretation. This context is less significant in early Christianity and represents one of a number of interpretive contexts that include also the liturgy, hymnody, preaching and iconography. In some cases the narrative and the role which Martha plays is altered significantly in these different contexts. Yet it is in these contexts—in the preaching, liturgy, hymnody and iconography—that most early Christians encountered Martha, not only, and not primarily, in the literary context. The figure that emerges there and the surprising range of ways in which Martha stories were told, interpreted, sung, painted and elaborated brings to light a far richer fabric of traditions woven around this figure than the canonical texts reveal. These wider texts and traditions are not merely interesting curiosities from the perspective of New Testament interpretation. Rather, they provide an important avenue for determining the meaning and interpretation of the canonical text in its historical and social/cultural context(s).

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This research was undertaken at The University of Queensland and supported by scholarship funding from the Lutheran World Federation. A UQ Graduate School Research Travel Award enabled access to the Index of Early Christian Art in Utrecht. I would like to express my gratitude to the staff of the Index of Early Christian Art, in particular its director Dr Colum Hourihane, and to the library staff at Utrecht University and the University of Queensland. I also wish to acknowledge with thanks the provision of photographs as well as permission to reproduce them from the Bibliotheque Nationale de France and the Medicean Laurentian Library.

I am grateful for the support of family and friends, whose interest in my research was gratifying and whose enthusiasm at times even extended to reading draft chapters. I am indebted especially to my parents, who tirelessly scoured German libraries for obscure texts, shared a memorable trip to Italy on the trail of Martha iconography, and read the dissertation as a matter of interest. My grandfather's legacy enabled my earliest studies in theology. I think he would have enjoyed seeing where it has led.

I thank Prof Jan den Boeft and the editorial board of *Vigiliae Christianae* for including this work in the series and Brill's academic reader for the helpful critique.

ABBREVIATIONS

1. Early Christian Texts

1 Apoc. Jas.	First Apocalypse of James
A. Phil.	Acts of Philip
A. Phil. Mart.	Martyrdom of Philip
ACO	Apostolic Church Order
Adv. Haer.	Adversus Haereses
CA	Constitutiones Apostolorum
Cont.	Pseudo-Clementine Contestatio
C. Cels.	Contra Celsum
de bapt.	De baptismo
de carne Chr.	De carne Christi
de vir. ill.	De viris illustribus
Dial.	Dialogue with Trypho
Dial. Sav.	Dialogue of the Saviour
Did.	Didache
Ep. Ap.	Epistula Apostolorum
Ep. Diog.	Epistle to Diognetus
Eph.	Letter to the Ephesians
Ex. Theod.	Excerpta ex Theodoto
Gos. Mary	Gospel of Mary
Gos. Pet.	Gospel of Peter
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas
HE	Ecclesiastical History
In Joh.	Commentarii in evangelium Joannis
In Res. Dom.	In Resurrectionem Domini
Mart. Pol.	Martyrdom of Polycarp
Or.	Oration
Pan.	Panarion
Protev. Jas.	Infancy Gospel of James
Protrep.	Protrepticus
PS	Pistis Sophia
Recog.	Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions
Ref. Haer.	Refutatio contra omnes haereses
SJC	Sophia of Jesus Christ
Strom.	Stromata
TD	Testamentum Domini

2. Journals and Reference Works

AHR	American Historical Review
ANF	A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the writings of the fathers down to A.D. 325* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965–1975)
ANRW	H. Temporini & W. Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972–)

BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BR	Bible Review
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CC	Christian Century
CCSA	Corpus Christianorum: Series Apocryphorum
CCSG	Corpus Christanorum: Series Graeca
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DACL	F. Cabrol & H. Leclercq (eds.), *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1907–1953)
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
ExpTim	Expository Times
FC	Fathers of the Church, A New Translation
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JES	Journal of Ecumenical Studies
JFSR	Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion
JR	Journal of Religion
JWR	Journal of Women and Religion
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex
NPNF I	P. Schaff (ed.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. First Series* (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1886–)
NPNF II	P. Schaff & H. Wace (eds.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second series* (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1890–)
NovT	Novum Testamentum
NTA	W. Schneemelcher & E. Hennecke (eds.), *New Testament Apocrypha* (R.McL. Wilson [ed.]; Cambridge: J. Clarke & Co; Louisville Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991–1992)
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	New Testament Studies
OC	Oriens Christianus
PG	J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Graeca* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1959–1996)
PL	J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Cursus Completus. SeriesLatina* (Paris: Garnier, 1958–1975)
PO	R. Graffin & F. Nau (eds.), *Patrologia Orientalis* (Paris: Firmindot, 1903–)
RAC	T. Klauser (ed.), *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum: Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der antiken Welt* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950–).
RB	Revue Biblique
RbK	K. Wessel (ed.), *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1966–)
REB	Revue des Études Byzantines
RQ	Römische Quartalschrift
RSR	Revue des Sciences Religieuses
SAOO	Studia Artium Orientalis et Occidentalis

SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPAW	Sitzungsberichte der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
ST	Studia Theologica
TDNT	G. Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (G. W. Bromiley [transl. & ed.]; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)
TRE	G. Krause & G. Müller (eds.), *Theologische Realenzyklopaedie* (Berlin: W. deGruyter, 1977–)
TS	Theological Studies
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
TWNT	G. Kittel (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933–67)
TZ	Theologische Zeitschrift
VC	Vigiliae Christianae
VC Supp	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZG	Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche

CHAPTER ONE

RETRIEVING MARTHA FROM THE MARGINS

Feminist biblical scholars have long been engaged in an extensive task of retrieving the history of women in the New Testament and early Church. Schüssler Fiorenza's study, *In Memory of Her: A feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins* (1983), has proven to be seminal in this endeavour. Texts are re-read with attentiveness to issues of patriarchal and androcentric bias and attempts are made to 'retrieve' the history of women preserved in the margins of the texts. The understanding of Mary Magdalene in particular has benefited from this research: numerous studies have re-examined New Testament and apocryphal texts in an effort to retrieve and reconstruct the role of this woman leader (Haskins 1993; Atwood 1993; Ricci 1994; Thompson 1995; de Boer 1997; Mohri 2000; Schaberg 2002; Brock 2003; Hearon 2004b).[1] Instead of the 'penitent sinner' (an identification of Mary Magdalene with other New Testament figures), this research has recovered the image of Mary as a leader, both in the Gospels and even more strongly in later Christian literature, particularly in gnostic texts.

Martha, conversely, has received limited attention in this line of scholarship. Numerous articles deal with her role, particularly in canonical texts (Brown 1975; D'Angelo 1990b; Reinhartz 1991; Schüssler Fiorenza 1993; Moloney 1994, 2003; Kitzberger 1995; Carter 1996; Collins 1998; Koperski 1999; Spiller 2001; Ssemakula 2002),[2] but with the exception of Yamaguchi's (2002) work, no full-length treatise has, to my knowledge, been devoted to Martha.[3] The reason for this relative lack of interest in Martha might stem from the traditional (androcentric) perspective which assigns Martha a marginal role relative to her more famous brother and sister (aided by the identification of Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany); the frequent negative interpretation of the Lukan portrait of Martha which places her in an unfavourable light;[4] and the predominance of scholarship within the traditional canonical and gnostic literature, in both of which Martha appears at the margins. Moreover, the attention devoted to Martha has often been as an aspect of scholarship devoted to other issues (so, for example, Cerrato 2002 and Petersen 1999).

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[1] See also the review of this research provided by Thimmes (1998) and the bibliography in Hearon (2004b: 2 n. 7).

[2] There are also numerous articles dealing with form-critical and literary issues (particularly the connection of the pericopes to their context), without any specific interest in the women in the text (for example, Laland 1959; Wall 1989; Thyen 1992a; Busse 1992; Burkett 1994; North 1997; Kilgallen 2003; Moloney 2003).

[3] Monographs in related fields of research include the theses of McVoy (1992) and Bumpus (2000) and the redaction-critical study of Luke 10:38–42 by Brutschek (1986). Medieval Martha traditions are not included here. On these consult Moltmann-Wendel (1982), King (1989), Kalamazoo (1989), Peters (1997), Chochreyas (1998) and Wagner-Douglas (1999).

1.1 Re-reading the canonical Martha

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1986; 1992; 1993) has used Luke 10:38–42 extensively to illustrate her exegetical method. Her 're-reading' of Martha focuses on the use of technical language in the text, specifically that Martha is described as engaging in διακονία (Lk 10:40), a term which can denote 'table service' (Beyer 1935; Collins 1990), but is used elsewhere in church leadership contexts (especially Acts 6:1–6, a text which has significant linguistic affinities with Luke 10:38–42). Reading against the patriarchal grain which prefers the silent, passive Mary to the διακονία of Martha, Schüssler Fiorenza and other feminist scholars have retrieved Martha as a community leader (Brown 1975; Moltmann-Wendel 1982; Schüssler Fiorenza 1993). This is typically done by contrasting the Lukan and Johannine portraits of Martha.[5] Both texts refer to Martha's 'serving' (Lk 10:40; Jn 12:2), but unlike Luke, John affirms Martha's leadership role, for in that Gospel she proclaims the Christ (Jn 11:27).

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[4] Traditional exegesis of Luke 10:38–42 typically interpreted Martha as the symbol of the active life in contrast to Mary as symbol of the contemplative life, an interpretation which is associated with Origen and which promoted a very negative assessment of Martha in Protestant exegesis with its disdain for 'works' (Moltmann-Wendel 1982: 27–30)—and indeed continues to do so. For a recent example of such exegesis see Spiller (2001). The Lukan Martha is also generally more familiar than the Johannine Martha. Telling in this regard is the article on Martha and Mary in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, which deals exclusively with the Lukan Martha and Mary, failing to mention entirely her appearance also in the Gospel of John, much less any patristic exegesis of the Johannine pericopes of Martha and Mary (Solignac and Donnat 1980).

[5] A significant current trend in feminist biblical scholarship perceives Luke-Acts as significantly negative towards women, tending to silence women and portray them in a conservative mould more akin to the Pastorals than the Pauline writings (Davies 1991; Schaberg 1992; Seim 1994a, b; Karris 1994; Reid 1996; Price 1997; Bieberstein 1998; Koperski 1999), while the Johannine writings are perceived to be more positive towards women's participation in leadership. This understanding permeates, to a greater or lesser degree, much feminist scholarship on Martha (Moltmann-Wendel 1982;

A second avenue of research, not necessarily independent of the first, has been an attempt to retrieve the historical Martha and Mary, either in the life of Jesus, or at the level of the early Church (D'Angelo 1990b; Twycross 1996; Yamaguchi 2002). Yamaguchi's monograph, *Mary and Martha: Women in the world of Jesus* (2002), involves an extensive reconstruction of the social and historical milieu of women's lives in the first century in an effort to create 'a new historical imagination' with which to read the Johannine text. She seeks to re-vision both 'the historical Martha and Mary' (whom she locates in the time of the historical Jesus) and the women in the Johannine community. Such attempts to retrieve the historical Martha and Mary generally assume that Luke and John offer independent attestations to historical persons, an assumption that is debated (Beutler 1990; Labahn and Lang 2004). More importantly, using androcentric texts as windows into the historical reality of the women described in the texts is a precarious venture, as Brooten (1985) and Clark (1998a; 2001) have shown.

More nuanced than a simple 'historical retrieval of Martha and Mary' is the approach of Mary Rose D'Angelo (1990b; 1999c), who argues that Martha and Mary represent a 'missionary pair' in the early Church alongside other female missionary pairs (Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Rom 16:12; Euodia and Syntyche, Phil 4:1). This argument builds on Schüssler Fiorenza's work noted earlier, on the use of terms that suggest titles (διάκονος: 'minister'; ἀδελφή: 'sister'), but extends it by arguing that Martha and Mary form

> a missionary *couple*, a pair like Paul and Sosthenes. As Paul designated himself 'apostle' and Sosthenes 'brother' (*adelphos*; 1 Cor. 1:1), so Martha was designated *diakonos* and Mary 'sister' (*adelphē*). (D'Angelo 1990b: 78)

This is an intriguing suggestion, though it needs to be observed that the exact term διάκονος is not used of Martha in the canonical texts, nor, for that matter, in later texts. She is described as 'ministering' (διακονεῖν, Lk 10:40; Jn 12:2) and as having 'a ministry' (διακονία, Lk 10:40) but

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Reinhartz 1991; Schüssler Fiorenza 1993; Yamaguchi 2002). A contrasting position is advocated by Carter (1996) and Collins (1998), who read Luke more positively (see also Karris 1994). Conversely Moloney (1994; 2003) interprets the Johannine Martha quite negatively, as the one deficient in faith by contrast to her sister.

not as 'a minister' (διάκονος).[6] If Martha was known as a *diakonos*, as D'Angelo suggests, then it is a little surprising that the texts do not use this word, but instead only cognate forms (διακονία, διακονεῖν).

1.2 The apocryphal Martha

All of the studies reviewed thus far focus on the canonical Martha and Mary. Other studies address, at least in passing, references to Martha in non-canonical texts. One such text is the *Apostolic Church Order* (*ACO*), an unusual church order of the third century whose origins probably lie in Egypt, Asia Minor or Syria (Bickell 1843; Harnack [1886] 1991a; Hennecke 1921; Leclercq 1925; Bradshaw 2002a; Stewart-Sykes 2006). In this text the twelve apostles—though a different set from the familiar canonical list—present instructions for the church. Martha and Mary suddenly appear as participants (the only participants besides the Twelve) when the discussion turns to women's roles. John recalls that Jesus did not allow the women to stand with the apostles at the Last Supper. Martha explains that it was because he saw Mary smiling, to which Mary replies that she did not laugh and invokes a saying of Jesus, "that the weak would be saved through the strong" (*ACO* 26.2; Stewart-Sykes 2006: 113).

A number of scholars have speculated about the origins both of this narrative, which places Martha and Mary at the Last Supper, and of the apocryphal saying of Jesus. Harnack ([1886] 1991b) proposed that the saying may derive from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, that Martha and Mary played a significant role in Egyptian Christianity, and that it is precisely this authority, in particular of Mary, that the *Apostolic Church Order* seeks to curb. Goetz (1921) adduced this text as an ancient witness for the thesis of Walter Haupt (1913), that in Mark's source the Last Supper was located in Bethany, following on directly from the anointing. Thus he suggests that the narrative in the *ACO* derives—perhaps via the *Gospel of the Egyptians*—from Special Mark.

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[6] Compare also the apocryphal *Acts of Philip* which describe Martha as ἡ διακονοῦσα τοῖς πλήθεσι καὶ κοπιῶσα σφόδρα (*A. Phil.* 8.2; Bovon, Bouvier, and Amsler 1999: 240; see 8.7 below). The term διάκονος is applied to Phoebe in Romans 16:1, evoking significant debate over the meaning of the word and the extent to which it denotes an official title (Martimort 1986; Richardson 1986; Arichea 1988; Whelan 1993; Castelli 1999; Garrison 2000).

Anton Baumstark (1913), meanwhile, drew attention to the Easter narrative in the *Epistula Apostolorum*, ostensibly a letter written from the apostles to the whole world, which has been dated to the early second century and located in Asia Minor or Egypt (Schmidt 1919; Hornschuh 1965; Hills 1990b; Stewart-Sykes 1997; Hill 1999; C. D. F. Müller 1991). This text places Martha among a group of three women who go to anoint the body of Jesus. Not only so, but in the Coptic version—taken to be the more original—Martha, not Mary, is sent as first apostle of the resurrection (*Ep. Ap.* 9–11). Baumstark gathered a number of other witnesses to Martha and Mary at the tomb, including the Coptic *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle*, an Egyptian amulet, a Syrian Gospel illumination and a post-communion song in the Ambrosian Missal. Apart from *Bartholomew*, all of these depict only Martha and Mary at the tomb, which led Baumstark to conclude that they all derive from the same apocryphal resurrection account. Noting the presence of Martha and Mary also in the *Apostolic Church Order*, he argued that both texts derive their information about Martha and Mary from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.[7]

This line of scholarship has subsequently received limited attention, first because interest in the *Apostolic Church Order* and the *Epistula Apostolorum* waned (Hills 1990b: 4) and second, because theories about the content of the Gospel of the Egyptians and the sources of Mark, while interesting, are ultimately impossible to prove or disprove in the absence of the texts. Increased awareness of the interplay of oral and literary traditions, which has been a focus of interest for more recent scholarship, further complicates the task of identifying simple lines of influence among documents (see, for example, Kelber 1983; Cartlidge 1990; Achtemeier 1990; Andersen 1991; Aune 1991; Bailey 1991; Robbins 1993; Parker 1997; Hearon 2004a).

Two other recent studies take up aspects of apocryphal Martha traditions. J. A. Cerrato (2001; 2002) deals extensively with Martha and Mary in Hippolytus' *Commentary on the Song of Songs* in the context of his research on the identity of Hippolytus. In this commentary Hippolytus compares the woman searching for her lover at night (SS 3:1–4) with Martha and Mary searching for the risen Lord, significantly with Martha playing the more prominent part. Cerrato suggests Martha and Mary might serve as part of an anti-gnostic critique directed against the *First* and *Second Apocalypse of James* and that the tradition of Martha and Mary at the tomb might represent a significant local tradition (2002: 194–200).

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[7] It is noteworthy that the list of the apostles is almost identical in the *Apostolic Church Order* and the *Epistula Apostolorum*, while differing significantly from the canonical lists.

Silke Petersen (1999: 254–258) covers Martha briefly in her work dealing with female disciples of Jesus in gnostic writings. Martha appears in a number of gnostic texts (*1 Apoc. Jas.* 40.26; *PS* 1.38–39; 1.57; 2.80; *Manichean Psalmbook* 192.21–22; 194.19–22). Petersen's assessment of her role in these texts occurs solely within the framework of current scholarship on women in Gnosticism. Like others, Petersen assumes that the 'Gnostic Mary,' who plays a central role in many gnostic texts, is predominantly Mary Magdalene, with whom other female characters, particularly other Marys, have been fused (see also Marjanen 1996).[8] Consequently she argues that those texts which name Martha and Mary interpret Mary as the Magdalene. This identification assigns an assumed priority to Mary over Martha that may derive more from the wider context of gnostic texts than from the individual texts in which the pair appear; indeed, Petersen even extends this assumed priority of Mary to other, non-gnostic texts. Thus she claims that Martha gains her place at the resurrection in the *Epistula Apostolorum* and Hippolytus' *On the Song of Songs* as a result of her identification as Mary Magdalene's sister (1999: 255).[9]

Petersen's argument illustrates well the need for the study undertaken here. For while a priority of Mary over Martha might be true in gnostic literature, such a priority cannot be presumed for all texts. It is all-too-easy to assume a fusion of Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalene and a priority of Mary over Martha in texts placing Martha at the tomb as a result of familiarity with the canonical resurrection accounts. But this is a hypothesis that ought to be tested. Even a cursory survey of all the witnesses placing Martha and Mary at the tomb, without assuming either Marian priority or that these texts necessarily derive from canonical texts, suggests that Martha, not Mary, takes the leading role in at least some of these texts, most notably in the *Epistula Apostolorum* and Hippolytus' *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, which represent both the earliest and most extensive extant witnesses to this tradition. Petersen's reading of Martha is limited by observing her only from within canonical and gnostic frameworks. Similarly Cerrato's (2002) theory that the tradition of Martha at the tomb represents a local tradition, while certainly possible, is at least incomplete, since it does not account for the wider evidence which indicates that this tradition is widespread both temporally and geographically. Here these individual texts will be read within the whole context of Martha traditions, with particular attention to the operation of gender and authority in these texts.

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[8] This assumption, that otherwise unidentified Marys in Gnostic texts most likely refer to Mary Magdalene, as well as the criteria for distinguishing the Magdalene from other Marys, has since been challenged by Shoemaker (2001). See also the essays in Jones, *Which Mary? The Marys of early Christian tradition* (2002) and Good, *Mariam, the Magdalen, and the Mother* (2005).

[9] Petersen is by no means unique in this approach: Schaberg (2002: 198) similarly includes the *Epistula Apostolorum* and *Apostolic Church Order* under the rubric 'gnostic.' She evidences the same bias in her reading of the *Epistula*, for only once does she even comment that Martha is first to proclaim the resurrection in the Coptic text (2002: 145); nor does she acknowledge that scholarship on the *Epistula* considers the Coptic version the more original (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 162). The consistent impression given is that Mary Magdalene is the key figure in these texts and that Martha plays a subsidiary role. This reading of the text is not justified.

1.3 GENDER, AUTHORITY AND TEXT

A number of scholars have argued that the Johannine resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene and her commissioning by the risen Jesus (Jn 20:10–18) invest her with apostolic authority (Hengel 1963: 251; Schüssler Fiorenza 1983: 332; Bovon 1984; Heine 1989b: 187–188; Price 1990: 65–66; de Boer 1997: 57; Hearon 2004b; D'Angelo 2005: 111). Schaberg even suggests that John 20 represents a succession narrative similar to 2 Kings 2:1–18 and that

> Mary Magdalene's claim to have seen the risen Jesus ascending carries with it the implicit claim to have inherited a double portion of the spirit that was in him. (2002: 305)

Hearon suggests such stories about Mary Magdalene "may have been told to legitimate the prophetic activity of women (and perhaps men) who claimed that their speech was authorized by the risen Jesus" (2004b: 93).[10] Ann Graham Brock (1998; 1999; 2003) argues that the conflation of Mary Magdalene with other women (Mary of Nazareth,

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[10] The prophetic and visionary aspects of the resurrection appearance to Mary are drawn into sharper relief by the parallels D'Angelo (2005) observes between John 20:14–17 and the vision of John in Revelation 1:10–19.

Mary of Bethany, the 'sinner' of Luke 7) and the replacement in some texts of the Magdalene with Mary of Nazareth or Peter is a means by which the tradition of Mary Magdalene as a leader in the early Church has been undermined or obscured.

One limitation of this research is that to date Mary Magdalene has stood virtually alone as the subject of such examinations into the connection between resurrection appearances and the apostolic authority of women. The present study offers a point of comparison. If the resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene invests her with apostolic authority, then traditions naming Martha as recipient of a resurrection appearance should have a similar effect and function. Yet when texts naming Martha as a witness of the resurrection (Hippolytus' *On the Song of Songs* and the *Epistula Apostolorum*) have been discussed by scholars interested in this issue of women's authority, Martha's presence has attracted no attention (de Boer 1997: 61, 137 n. 13; Schaberg 2002: 137, 166) or been dismissed as mistaken (Chappuzeau 1976: 56; Haskins 1993: 63–66; Nürnberg 1996: 228) or irrelevant (Mohri 2000: 160).[11] Even as feminist scholars have recognised and discussed the conflation of a number of figures into Mary Magdalene, they have repeatedly read three narratives that name 'Mary' and 'Martha' (Hippolytus' *On the Song, Epistula Apostolorum* and the *Apostolic Church Order*) as narratives about Mary Magdalene, without supporting argumentation for such an identification of the Mary in the text (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983: 307; Haskins 1993: 63; Schaberg 2002: 137, 143–144, 166, 168, 198 n. 397).[12] It is ironic that in feminist research, which explicitly recognises the marginalisation of women in androcentric texts, Martha has consequently remained on the margins and in the shadow of the Magdalene.

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[11] Exceptions are Bovon (1984: 53), who argues that Martha's presence in the Easter narrative of the *Epistula Apostolorum* intends to undermine the authority of Mary, and Cerrato (2001: 295), who finds in the Hippolytan commentary the first example of the conflation of Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany.

[12] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza provides a telling example. She comments on Mary and Martha in the *Apostolic Church Order* and simply asserts categorically that Mary "was earlier identified as Mary Magdalene" (1983: 307) without providing a source. Neither the edition of Schermann ([1914–16] 1968) nor that of Harnack ([1886] 1991a) names Mary Magdalene at any point. Only "Mary" appears and only in connection with Martha.

1.3.1 *Women, text and reality*

To claim that resurrection appearances invest with authority is to make an implicit claim about the relationship of such stories to the lived reality of women. Yet this is to invoke a deeply contested methodological issue about the relationship of text to reality, about the relationship of women in ancient texts to women in the ancient world (see, for example, Brooten 1985; LiDonnici 1999).

Schüssler Fiorenza rightly warns,

> texts about women do not directly describe women's actual historical reality and agency, they are only indicators of it. Such texts mention women and marginalize them at the same time. Androcentric biblical texts tell stories and construct social worlds and symbolic universes that mythologize, reverse, absolutize, and idealize patriarchal differences and, in doing so, obliterate or marginalize the historical presence of the devalued "others." Biblical texts about women therefore are like the tip of an iceberg, intimating what is submerged and obliterated in historical silence. They have to be read as touchstones of the historical reality that they both repress and construct. (1992: 32)[13]

For this reason Brooten advises those who wish "to learn about the lives, practices, and beliefs of early Christian women... [to] focus primarily on those women" (1985: 65). She charges that "the vast majority of research on women in early Christianity does not, however, focus primarily on women but rather on what men thought about women" (ibid.; see also LiDonnici 1999: 80–81). The complexity of deciding whether a text represents 'women' or 'what men thought about women'—the historical reality of women, or an androcentric fiction that interprets, re-inscribes or obliterates this reality—is well illustrated in the debates over the so-called 'chastity stories' in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.[14] Peter Brown has argued that these texts

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[13] It is generally assumed that all of the primary texts concerning Martha were authored by men. While there is certainly evidence for women's literacy and authorship in the ancient world (Cole 1981; Snyder 1989; Lefkowitz 1991; Haines-Eitzen 1998, 2000; Harvey 2004), Kraemer (1991) suggests that there is no Christian or Jewish text *known* to have been authored by a woman prior to the fourth century, with the possible exception of the martyrdom of Perpetua. In most cases the authorship of the texts considered here is unknown, which allows for the possibility that the text might have been authored by a woman. Such authorship is notoriously difficult to detect, however.

There is also the possibility that the Martha stories, even if written by men, preserved 'women's stories.' Price (1997) has proposed that the Gospel of Luke incorporates a number of stories that derive from widow communities in the early churches. He includes the narrative of Martha and Mary as one such story. While the suggestion that the narratives may preserve women's stories is an intriguing one, it is not a central focus here because of the methodological complexities involved in answering such a question. One feature of the Martha traditions which might suggest they are women's stories is Lefkowitz's observation that, if anything, the distinguishing feature in women's writing may be *not* drawing attention to men (1991: 213–214). The Martha/Mary stories are unusual among stories about sisters in that their subject matter does not revolve around a husband or children (unlike other famous literary sisters such as Rachel and Leah in the Old Testament and Queen Dido and Anna in the *Aeneid*), though in one instance (Jn 11:1–44) it does revolve around a male, their brother Lazarus.

> should not be read as evidence for the actual role of women in Christianity. Rather, they reflect the manner in which Christian males of that period partook in the deeply ingrained tendency of all men in the ancient world, to use women 'to think with.' (Brown 1988: 153; see also Cooper 1996: 55)

Rather than independent agents, the women are here understood to be "rhetorical markers of the character of the men under whose control they stand" (Matthews 2001b: 47). Matthews has rightly criticised the reductionism inherent in approaches that reduce women in androcentric texts merely to signs in male discourse.

> How is it conceivable that in the early church, which was never an exclusively male sect, questions about authority and the social order could have *nothing to do with women*? Even if the authority question was being raised by men and answered by men, in early Christianity these questions and answers were intimately connected to the status and role of women. (ibid.: 50)

Brown's argument that women are used 'to think with' is a selective use of the work of Levi-Strauss, for the latter goes on to observe a crucial difference between women and words: "words do not speak, while women do; as producers of signs, women can never be reduced to the status of symbols or tokens" (Levi-Strauss 1963: 61). Matthews therefore rejects an approach that either reduces literature to a reflection of the world on the one hand, or simply absorbs history into textuality on the other.[15]

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[14] The second- and third-century apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (*Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter, Acts of John, Acts of Andrew* and *Acts of Thomas*) contain a number of stories in which a wealthy woman forsakes her marriage bed as a sign of her conversion. Both the woman and the apostle thereby come into conflict with the husband, a conflict which usually provokes the martyrdom of the apostle. The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* are probably the most famous and most widely circulated example of such a story. On these stories see Davies (1980); Kraemer (1980); Junod (1981); Pervo (1982); MacDonald (1983; 1984); Bovon and Junod (1986) Burrus (1987); Price (1997); Boughton (1991); Cooper (1996); Cameron (1989); Kaestli (1990a). Some (e.g., Davies 1980; Kraemer 1980; Burrus 1987; Price 1997) suggest that these tales reflect real conflicts experienced by ascetic women in the early Church. Others (e.g., Brown 1988; Cooper 1996) are emphatic that this is not the case.

In the search for a credible historical methodology after the 'linguistic turn,' Spiegel proposes a focus on the 'social logic' of texts.

> All texts occupy determinate social spaces, both as products of the social world of authors and as textual agents at work in that world, with which they entertain often complex and contestatory relations. In that sense, texts both mirror *and* generate social realities, are constituted by *and* constitute the social and discursive formations which they may sustain, resist, contest, or seek to transform, depending on the case at hand. (1990: 77)

Such a focus on the social logic of the text implies a careful contextualisation of texts, which itself is problematic in the case of many early Christian texts, not only because their provenance is a matter of debate, but because some of the texts, at least, have been subject to numerous revisions and re-interpretations over time. Texts that became, and served as, sacred texts over centuries are constituted by and constitute not only the social space in which they first emerged, but become a part of a large number of social spaces that can differ widely from each other culturally, geographically and temporally. In each of these the texts may "sustain, resist, contest, or seek to transform" and may "entertain…complex and contestatory relations." In such cases it is not sufficient to ask about 'the' social logic of a text. Nevertheless, the principle is sound in recognising that a text is shaped by

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[15] It is particularly the absorption of history into textuality that has confronted historical studies since the challenge of semiotics problematised the use not only of texts as a means of retrieving history, but of the very existence of any 'real' history that might be retrieved (Partner 1986; Toews 1987; Spiegel 1990; Clark 1994, 1998b).

> Language-model epistemology…threatens to sever the tie between language and any reality external to language on the ground that language…*is* the very structure of mental life, and no metalanguage can ever stand outside itself to observe a reality external to itself. (Partner 1986: 95)

This challenge goes much deeper than the critique of Cooper and Brown, for in this instance it is no longer merely that women serve as signs in male discourse; rather, the men who are posited to be engaged in this discourse have vanished as well. History itself disappears into a "labyrinth of 'textuality' from which there is no exit" (Spiegel 1990: 72).

Spiegel (1990) offers a cogent critique of this 'labyrinth of textuality.' First, she observes "the rather one-sided nature of the discussion, which has largely been in the hands of literary critics rather than historians" (1990: 73). Second, experience cannot be reduced to meaning (a point also made by Toews 1987: 906; who dubs this "the hubris of wordmakers who claim to be makers of reality"). This is the basis for the critique of Matthews (2001b). Women as agents, as readers of texts, as subjects impacted by the texts and able to respond to them, cannot simply be factored out of the equation by a semiotic appeal to the self-referential nature of texts. Third, collapsing 'text' and 'context' is unhelpful to the critical endeavour. "Literary text and historical context are not the same thing, and if one should not be reduced to the other, neither should they be held up as identical foci of the scholar's gaze" (Spiegel 1990: 75). For while a text can be deconstructed, the historical context must first of all be constructed, from a range of literary and documentary sources.

> But whether the "always already" textualized character of historical data, its inevitably mediated state as made up of language, necessarily means that it is "made up," foreclosing access to any past other than that we interpretively impose on texts, remains, one hopes, an open issue. (ibid.: 76)

> a host of unstated desires, beliefs, misunderstandings, and interests which impress themselves upon the work, sometimes consciously, sometimes not, but which arise from pressures that are social and not merely intertextual. (Spiegel 1990: 84)

This recognition has informed a host of rhetorical critical studies attentive to gender and authority, particularly on Mary Magdalene (Hengel 1963; Schüssler Fiorenza 1983; Bovon 1984; Heine 1989b; Setzer 1997; Brock 1998; 1999; 2003; Hearon 2004b), on the women prophets at Corinth (Wire 1990), on the widows in early Christianity (Osiek 1983; Bassler 1984; 1996; Methuen 1995, 1997; 1999; Cardman 1999; Penn 2001; Tsuji 2001; Taniguchi 2002) and on the rich women converts in Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* and the book of Acts (Matthews 2001a).[16]

Texts are not written in a vacuum, but into a concrete historical situation. Since arguments are never one-sided, careful analysis of the one side of the argument that has been preserved can reveal something of the arguments of the other side. "Strong arguments presuppose strong counterarguments," observes Castelli (1999: 226). "Therefore it is possible to reconstruct the counterarguments and whole social and political backgrounds from the arguments for which one has direct evidence" (ibid.). Indeed,

> the amount of energy which a culture expends in order to suppress or marginalize an ideological voice forms a reliable index to the effectiveness of that voice as posing a threat to the hegemonic practices of that culture. (Boyarin 1991: 31)

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[16] While not dealing specifically with women or gender, the article of Tilley (1990) examining two martyr stories of North Africa is also worth mentioning here for its incisive analysis of the way in which such stories are used for social control.

Exploring "the rhetorical strategies of the androcentric text and the symbolic universes it constructs means to explore not only what the text excludes but also to investigate *how* it constructs and what it includes" (Schüssler Fiorenza 1989: 28–29).

At times this construction of reality is quite intentional: church orders, for example, explicitly seek to construct the reality envisaged in the text. This is not to be confused with reality itself, however. In seeking to construct a certain reality, the texts might also serve as indicators of a different reality, a reality which the text seeks to change (Penn 2001: 6). Nor is the power of the reader and interpreter of the text to be underestimated. The history of the interpretation of the canonical Martha texts is eloquent testimony to the ability of exegetes to interpret a text to suit their own purposes and to read a text in radically divergent ways.

Evidence for such readings of texts is extant predominantly (perhaps even exclusively) from men; nevertheless there is no inherent reason to assume that women, in particularly well-read and educated women, were not equally competent to re-read texts to suit their purposes. Thus, while Cameron (1989: 187) is no doubt correct in the observation that rhetoric was carried out by men about women, in the context of unquestioned assumptions about women, and that women framed their own lives and understandings within this rhetorical context, the agency of women in framing their own lives and understandings must not be underestimated.

A rhetorical perspective is also useful in attending to the different contexts of the texts. The function of church orders and the rhetorical strategies such documents use to achieve their aims differs from the function of hymns or marginal manuscript illuminations. All of these texts claim to be authoritative in some way. All of them seek to move, to persuade, to convince the audience. But the rhetoric of liturgy has different goals and different means to the rhetoric of apologetic texts. Iconography uses different strategies again.[17] The way in which Martha functions to support the rhetorical aims of the texts and images in these different contexts can consequently also be expected to vary.

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[17] Images serve rhetorical functions not only implicitly but in some cases quite explicitly and intentionally, as seen, for example, in the analysis of early Christian imagery of Mathews (1999).

1.3.2 *Retrieving the interpreter*

Matthews' (2001b) critique that women cannot simply be factored out of the equation by reducing them to signs in male discourse draws attention to the place of the interpreter, to women and men as agents and subjects, not merely objects in the text. The social logic of a text may be androcentric, but the social world is not limited to men. The social world is a world that includes women who are also agents who shape that world and subjects who respond to the texts. One might ask, for example, whether an 'androcentric' hymn is still 'androcentric' when it is sung by a woman. Is that category even useful in such a context? Does it matter who wrote the hymn, or only who sings it, when and where (and what meaning they attach to it at the time)? As Brooten observes,

> to say that Junia and Prisca were Paul's associates is…not to say that they shared his theology, Christology, or understanding of women.…They may not have accepted Paul's views for themselves or they may have. In any case they probably could not ignore them, and Paul's views are therefore a part of their history and must be analysed as such. (1985: 81–82)

Recognising the agency of women as interpreters of texts in principle, how might one access this agency in practice? One strategy is offered by Fehribach (1998), who constructs a first-century woman reader and re-reads the Gospel of John from that perspective. A different strategy is used here which consists in broadening the perspective by including not only 'sacred texts' (be they canonical or apocryphal) but also 'commentary on the text' (such as Hippolytus' *Commentary on the Song of Songs*), liturgical texts (hymns, prayers) and images. This broader range and diversity of sources furnishes a richer set of data for reconstructing the faith and theology of the early Christians. Centering less on texts and incorporating non-textual data brings into view not just the literate minority of the early Christian centuries, but a broader Christian populace. Literacy rates vary from place to place, and it ought not to be assumed *a priori* that women were either illiterate or uneducated. The evidence suggests, however, that most people were illiterate in the first three centuries and in all places women are less likely to be literate than men.[18] Most early Christians, and all the more so most early Christian women, were predominantly 'hearers' and 'seers' rather than 'readers' and most heard and saw the stories in the context of the liturgy.

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[18] On literacy in the ancient world, especially as it relates to women, see Cole (1981); Kraemer (1991); Egger (1994); Gamble (1995); Clark (1999: 45–61); Haines-Eitzen (1998, 2000); Cribiore (2002); Hearon (2004b: 9–12, 19–42).

Liturgical texts and images draw attention to what is heard and seen and consequently create a better context for focusing on women and men as agents of seeing, hearing and interpreting, not just as readers/interpreters. Seeing and hearing is not inferior to reading and writing. Papias, for example, emphasises his preference for the 'living voice' over against the written text (*HE* 3.39.4; Jerome *de vir. ill.* 18). The central place accorded to vision and visionaries (such as the seer of the Apocalypse and his visions) and to the divine word as a spoken word in early Christian texts cautions against reading modern assumptions about the inherent relative values of seeing, hearing, reading and writing back into the ancient world. This emphasis on the importance of 'seers' and 'hearers' in addition to 'readers' is thus not an attempt to retrieve the 'uneducated masses' or to give voice to those rendered mute in the extant record by their inability to write; it is rather an attempt to re-direct attention away from anachronistic notions evoked by the modern notion of a 'reader' and to envisage more appropriate models for conceptualising early Christian interpreters and their interpretative contexts.

The inclusion of liturgical texts and images invites constant attention to the question how the sacred texts functioned in the whole life of the community. If a community owns and uses the canonical Gospels, but at the same time regularly sings a hymn in which Martha and Mary are the apostles of the resurrection, how do these two relate? Which 'text' is more authoritative? Which text is more significant in shaping or revealing the common faith of that community? Most scholarship in biblical studies does not ask this question, yet the fact that theologians of the early Church chose to communicate their theology through hymns—Arius, Bardaisan, Ephraim and the hymns in the New Testament as cases in point—should alert theologians and biblical scholars alike to the value of including the liturgy and hymnody of the early Church in their focus when they ask questions about the faith and theology of the early Church. The same question can be asked of images, which serve not only as decorations or illustrations but can also provide access to the reality that is depicted in them.

Returning to Junia and Prisca, it is of course true that Paul's views are part of their world and can be analysed as such (so Brooten 1985). It is also true that the hymns Junia and Prisca sang and the images they saw are just as important as the Pauline epistles they read. A perspective which encompasses hymnody, liturgy and iconography within its view is both more comprehensive and more accurate—if only in drawing attention to the many pieces of the puzzle which are missing, since sources for the worship and iconography of the earliest Christians are sparse and/or indistinguishable from the Jewish culture in which they were embedded.

1.4 Text and image

"Images," writes Margaret Miles,

> are a significant piece of the discourse of Christian communities that has not been systematically incorporated in the study of historical Christian ideas. They are…a piece that is capable of changing our understanding of the whole discourse. (1985: 28)

The interpretation of images, however, presents its own methodological issues and complexities (Cassiday 1993; Drewer 1996; Cartlidge 1998; Mathews 1999; Jensen 1998; 2000). Two key issues are particularly relevant here. First, having observed that art provides an alternative avenue into the tradition, it needs to be asked, whose views and traditions are expressed in the iconography. Is art 'popular culture,' "the medium of the common folk" (Jensen 2000: 23) as opposed to the literary culture of the educated few? Could images reveal the place Martha had among the populace better than the texts? Second, what is the relationship of texts to images? If, as is the case in one of the images considered here, a Gospel manuscript does not include Martha among the women at the tomb of Jesus in the text, yet at the same time includes a marginal illustration of Martha at the tomb, does the picture function as part of the text, as commentary on the text, or as 'intertext' (reference to another text or tradition, whether written or oral)? To what extent does the image determine the interpretation of the text and vice versa?

It has at times been assumed that images represent 'popular culture' (so, for example, Klauser 1965: 56–57; Snyder 2003: 7–11; cf. Engemann 1996a: 543–544) or 'instruction for the simple.' This interpretation of the function of early Christian art is widespread and is sometimes supported by a quote from Pope Gregory the Great who used the argument that

> what writing supplies to readers painting offers to uneducated viewers; for in painting even the ignorant can see what course they should follow,

> and in painting the literate can see. (*Ep*. 9.209; Mathews 1986: 215; see also Chazelle 1990)

Since there are some early Christian texts that criticise the use of images, it has also been imagined that "art was the medium of the common folk, created against the will and teaching of church authorities who were iconophobic well into the fourth century" (Jensen 2000: 23).

This opposition between written texts as a higher form of theological reflection and art as a reflection of 'popular culture'—and the related hypothesis, that Judaism and early Christianity were generally iconoclastic—has been critiqued by Murray (1977), Miles (1985), Engemann (1996b), Jensen (2000) and Salvadori (2002). The critique consists in the charge that the early Christian writers cited in support of an aniconic attitude have been misrepresented (Murray 1977), that the lack of extant Christian art from the first two centuries is explicable as both the result of the tiny size of the Christian population (see Stark 1996: 7) and its indistinguishability from pagan art (Finney 1994), that the supervision of the catacombs by clergy such as the deacon (and soon-to-be bishop) Callistus meant that "Christian art from the beginning must have required both community and clerical approval" (Jensen 2000: 23), and that the expense of producing art places it beyond the means of the common populace, suggesting rather that it derives from a small, elite subset who could afford such art. The preconception of the 'educated clergy' and the implicit assumption of the lesser education of the 'common folk' whose ideas and interests are supposedly represented in art might thus readily be reversed.

> The Christian *literati* of Rome probably also had access to a cultural network that had been consolidated over centuries, one in which texts, scholars and ideas, Christian or otherwise, circulated freely, that is without the mediation of the clerical hierarchy in the city. In fact, not all Roman clergymen necessarily shared or had access to the literary culture of upper-class patrons in the city and thus may not have been privy to some of the more sophisticated theological meanings that the latter inscribed or read into biblical images. (Salvadori 2002: 28)

Early Christian art, then, is neither the expression of the 'common folk,' nor is it 'simple.' Rather, art "functions as a highly sophisticated, thoughtful, and often eloquent mode of theological expression" (Jensen 1998: 350; see also Alexander 1997: 56). "Early Christian art is never a naive, storytelling art" observes Mathews, since

> every process of selecting Gospel material and every shaping of the material into concrete images involves a partisan exegesis of the text, and every exegesis belongs to a time-bound and culturally conditioned way of receiving the Christian message. (1982: 200)

It is often difficult, if not impossible, to know this cultural context sufficiently to interpret the images confidently. Indeed, the fact that at times the same images are classified as different biblical scenes indicates that the iconography is not sufficiently unique, or not sufficiently understood, to allow certainty in the identification of the image.

Related to this issue is the question of the place of texts in the interpretation of images, which has become a matter of some disagreement among scholars. Nauerth (1980: 127), for example, criticises an approach which gives priority of place to texts in interpreting images because images are not necessarily tied to texts at all. Rather, she suggests, art follows its own laws and develops forms of expression independently of literature. Conversely, Jensen observes that "to assume that the word is one or more steps distant from visual expression is to cut off a valuable resource for interpretation" (2000: 6). The question is thus not whether to use texts, but how to use texts—and indeed, which texts to use (see also Miles 1985: 15–39; Cartlidge 1998). It need not be presumed that the canonical text is the primary text for interpretation. Increasingly in recent years the depiction of apocryphal texts in art has attracted attention (Nauerth and Warns 1981; Bernabò 2001; Cartlidge and Elliott 2001; Elliott 2003). Similarly, Konrad Onasch (1958) examined the interaction between liturgy and iconography and demonstrated that the iconography of the nativity is not simply a depiction of the biblical texts, but of profound theological reflection evident also in the liturgy.

Onasch is by no means alone in noticing this connection between art and liturgy. Baumstark (1926) examined the relationship of art and hymnody and identified influence in both directions. Ševcenko (1998) has provided examples of ways in which the liturgy influenced book illumination, Maquire (1981) examined ways in which sermons and hymns impacted Byzantine art, and Mathews (1971, 1999) has discussed the interplay between art, architecture and liturgy. The best interpretive text might thus not be the canonical text, but rather an apocryphal or liturgical text. Moreover, since images might be created for one text but consequently copied into another, an image can be disconnected from its original interpretive text (Weitzmann 1970: 130–151). Thus, even where an image appears embedded alongside text, as is the case in manuscript illuminations, the text that appears with the image might nevertheless not be the best interpretive text for the image.[19]

The relationship between text and image is a matter not only of the interpretation of images, but also an issue in terms of the place of texts and images in the life of the early Christians. It has become clear that, far from being simply 'the Bible in pictures,' early Christian iconography participates profoundly in the theology and liturgy of the early Church. While it can serve decorative and didactic purposes, it also has functions "that might be characterized as exegetical, symbolic, liturgical, and iconic" (Jensen 1998: 355). Icons, for example, do not merely illustrate a saint, but provide access to that saint in worship. They do not simply represent, but make present and, by their ability to establish contact between viewer and viewed, are able to both operate in the present and shape the future (Kartsonis 1998). In this case it might also be asked which is more authoritative, text or image? If an icon is able to establish contact with the saint it depicts, might such an icon not be more 'real' and more authoritative for a Byzantine Christian than a text?[20] In the case of manuscript illuminations, conversely, it needs to be asked who saw the image. Were such images regularly seen in worship (so Manion 1999), or were illuminated manuscripts treasures, luxury items that were seen at best on special occasions (so Lowden 1990)?[21]

These are complex questions. They highlight the value of attending to Martha images not only as a means of seeing, as much as possible, the world of the early Christians and the Martha traditions carried in text, image and song, but also for understanding the organic unity of the whole and their interpretive interrelationship. Text interprets image, but image also interprets text. Liturgy likewise interprets image and vice versa. The significance of images for understanding the text, in particular for understanding the text in the life of the early Church, therefore cannot be overestimated.

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[19] On the related question of the role of inscriptions in images, particularly in an oral culture in which most people cannot read, see Kessler (1985), Camille (1985), Chazelle (1990) and Drewer (1996).

[20] Mango observes that Byzantine Christians "presumed resemblance not only between image and model, but also between image and supernatural vision" (1972: xv), such that not only were icons of saints believed to replicate their model exactly, but when saints appeared in visions they looked exactly like their icon and were recognisable by that resemblance. As such, images are conceivably 'truer,' more forceful and more convincing than texts.

[21] Loerke (1987: 133) has suggested on the basis of the greater wear on the frontispiece pages of the Rossano Gospels, which contain full-page miniatures, that these pages were shown to small groups, "perhaps by a reader who guided them through the pictorial narrative, expounding on its meaning" (Drewer 1996: 4).

> The translation of the Gospels from Greek into Latin altered their content only very marginally; the translation of the Gospels from literature into visual images profoundly affected their content. Images are not neutral; they are not just stories put into pictures. Nor are they mere documents in the history of fashion. Images are dangerous. Images, no matter how discreetly chosen, come freighted with conscious or subliminal memories; no matter how limited their projected use, they burn indelible outlines into the mind.... Images not only express convictions, they alter feelings and end up justifying convictions. Eventually, of course, they invite worship. One cannot write history without dealing with the history of images. (Mathews 1999: 11)

The way Martha was depicted in the art and iconography is highly significant for understanding her place in early Christian tradition and makes a significant difference to the interpretation of the texts, including the canonical texts.

1.5 Conclusions

A survey of current scholarship on Martha suggests that to date such scholarship has been limited to parts of the tradition (such as the canonical Gospels, gnostic literature, or literature associated with a particular author), or been an aspect of work devoted principally to other concerns. What is offered here is a broader analysis of Martha traditions in light of each other, and in the light of research on women in early Christianity that has proven so fruitful in studies of Mary Magdalene. Such an analysis can extend and confirm or correct previous proposals on the interpretation of Martha, as well as serving as a helpful point of comparison for the research on the authority of Mary Magdalene, particularly with regard to the connection of this authority to resurrection appearances. The survey encompasses not only literary texts, but also liturgical texts and images, because such an approach enables a broader perspective for conceptualising and interpreting the faith and theology of early Christians.

A perspective that examines only the canonical text, or that privileges the canonical text as the primary interpretive context from which all other material is evaluated, is both limited and inappropriately biased for historical research into early Christianity. Early Christianity is not monolithic, and the emergence of 'canonical' texts was a slow process. For this reason alone the wide variety of texts that are now 'apocryphal' cannot be presumed to have had a secondary status at all times and in all places.[22] Furthermore, since the majority of people in the ancient world could neither read nor afford books (Gamble 1995), most early Christians encountered the traditions, narratives and theology of the Church in oral contexts, such as liturgy, hymnody and preaching, and non-literary contexts such as iconography. Consideration of the iconography, hymnody and preaching of the early Church, therefore, is not an 'optional extra' that might be added to the 'study of the text,' or that might be considered the provenance of 'patristic scholars' or 'art historians' rather than 'New Testament scholars.' Rather, it offers a key avenue for revealing both the faith and theology of the early Christians and for interpreting the biblical narrative.[23]

It was noted earlier that Martha appears predominantly at either tomb or table. This survey of Martha traditions is consequently structured around these two themes, beginning with an examination of the Gospel of John and the way in which the Johannine Martha has been interpreted. Next the texts placing Martha at the tomb of Jesus are examined. A third section examines the texts discussing Martha's διακονία, beginning with the Gospel of Luke. Finally a number of texts that cite Martha as one of a number of women disciples are reviewed before drawing some conclusions about the various traditions as a whole.

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[22] The terms 'heterodox' and 'orthodox,' 'canonical' and 'apocryphal' are fraught with complexity when used in the contexts of the first three centuries of Christianity. Given the diversity both of beliefs and of canons among different groups (Bauer 1964; Robinson and Koester 1971; Koester 1980, 1984, 1990; Smith 1992; Markschies 2001), any judgment of 'orthodoxy' or 'canon' is in effect a judgment made by one group over against another, rather than any kind of objective category that can be applied to Christianity as a whole and by means of which these early texts can be reliably classified. Matters of orthodoxy and canon were very much part of the rhetoric of early Christianity; but precisely for that reason and because of the continuing significance of both canon and orthodoxy in modern Christianity, the use of these categories for establishing boundaries and analysing early Christian texts can be misleading rather than illuminating.

[23] Compare Hearon (2004a), who similarly stresses the importance of oral contexts for understanding and interpreting the Biblical text.

CHAPTER TWO

A SECOND PETER? MARTHA IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The account of the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1–44) has evoked a great deal of interest in Johannine scholarship in terms of determining its sources or historicity (e.g., Thyen 1992a; Wagner 1992; Baltz 1996), in terms of its function in the Gospel itself (e.g., Stibbe 1994; Jensen 1995), and in the interpretation of a number of striking aspects of the story (e.g., Delebecque 1986; Lindars 1992; Twycross 1996; Coloe 2000). Jesus in particular acts in surprising ways, and the narrative contains a number of gaps that create a story which is as elusive as it is intriguing and delightful. The text has been the focus of extensive research, including numerous monographs and countless commentaries.[1] Most have focused on the Christological and theological implications of the story—and quite rightly so. Here these matters remain tangential. For it is also instructive to ask what difference it makes that Martha appears in this story; that it is Martha and not Mary or Philip or Peter who announces that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world" (11:27).[2] In the Gospel of Matthew Peter's confession of Jesus as "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" evokes the response,

> Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Mtt 16:17–19)

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[1] Monographs on the raising of Lazarus include Descamps *et al.* (1981), Kremer (1985), Marchadour (1988), Wagner (1988), North (2001) and Esler and Piper (2006). Some of the more significant commentaries on the Gospel are Bultmann (1941), Dodd (1953; 1963), Brown (1966), Boismard and Lamouille (1977), Schnackenburg (1982–87), Haenchen (1984), Smith (1999), Thyen (2005) as well as the literary and source-critical studies of Fortna (1970; 1989), Culpepper (1983), Mlakuzil (1987) and Van Belle (1994).

[2] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of the biblical text are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version*.

The renaming of Simon as Peter and the pun on the name Peter (Πέτρος), meaning 'rock,' is known also to the author of the fourth Gospel (Jn 1:42). Yet the confession of Jesus as the Christ is placed not on the lips of Peter, but on those of Martha. Is her confession of 'the Messiah, the Son of God' then the rock upon which the Johannine church is founded? And if so, what might this reveal about the place of women in the Johannine communities on the one hand and the place of Martha in early Christian traditions on the other?

In modern scholarship the Johannine Martha has found a varied reception, ranging from praise to reprobation. Some have understood her confession in 11:27 as "the most fully developed confession of Johannine faith in the Fourth Gospel" (Schneiders 1987: 53; see also Schneiders 2003: 180; Seim 1987: 71). Others attribute to her at best incomplete faith (Brown 1966: 434–435), a reading which has been argued vigorously and repeatedly by Moloney (1994; 1996: 154–177; 2003). Thus it is by no means a foregone conclusion that Martha's confession renders her the model Johannine believer, let alone a pillar of the Johannine community. She might rather form a matching pair with Thomas, whose claim to fame is his doubt rather than his faith (see Jn 20:24–29).

There are two separate questions of interest here: the way Martha appears in the text of the Gospel on the one hand, and the way in which she has been received in early traditions on the other. To the question, is Martha the model of Johannine faith? can be added the question, has Martha been interpreted as the model of Johannine faith? The way in which the history of interpretation can transform a narrative and the perception of a biblical character has been well documented in the case of Mary Magdalene (Haskins 1993; Thompson 1995; de Boer 1997; King 1998; Petersen 1999; Mohri 2000; Schaberg 2002; Brock 2003; Hearon 2004b). Irrespective of whether the text of John 11 presents Martha as a model of faith, the interpreters of the text may have presented Martha quite differently. For this reason I will examine not only the presentation of Martha within the text of John 11, but also the history of interpretation of Martha in this narrative.

2.1 The raising of Lazarus within the Gospel of John

The raising of Lazarus functions as a turning point in the Gospel of John. Typically chapter 11 is seen as the climax of the first half of the

Gospel, the last sign in the ‘Book of Signs’ (Dodd 1953). In Dodd’s schema chapter 1 functions as a proem and chapter 21 is a later addition, while the rest of the Gospel is divided into the ‘Book of Signs’ and the ‘Book of the Passion’ (for a critique see Minear 1983; Hartman 1984; Thyen 1992b).[3] Conversely Mlakuzhil (1987) and Thyen (1992a; 2005) hold that John 11 opens the second half of the Gospel which they entitle the ‘book of the hour of Jesus’ (so also Østenstad 1991). The first half, ‘the book of the witness’ (John the Baptist), climaxes in Jesus’ statement, “the Father and I are one” (10:30) and ends with Jesus returning “across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptising earlier” (πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου εἰς τὸν τόπον ὅπου ἦν Ἰωάννης τὸ πρῶτον βαπτίζων, 10:40), this notice forming an inclusio with 1:28 (Ταῦτα ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐγένετο πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, ὅπου ἦν ὁ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων). Moreover, the people who come to Jesus there observe that “everything that John said about this man was true” (10:41), recalling the notice which opens the first half of the Gospel, “this is the testimony given by John” (1:19).

Most scholars tend towards a combination of the two approaches, seeing in the narrative both “the culmination of the first part of the Gospel and…the prelude to its second part” (Hakola 1999: 230; so also Lee 1994: 189; Conway 1999: 135; Kim 2004: 145). Kermode dubs it “a great hinge of [the Gospel’s] plot” (1987: 456) and Byrne (1990) even finds in it a microcosm of the whole Gospel. The story is clearly central to the Gospel, which already serves as a first indicator that the characters within it are likely to be highly significant.

While 11:1–44 is typically taken as the limits of the narrative, Lee (1994: 191–192) and Moloney (2003) argue that the story continues to 12:11, including also the anointing at Bethany and the plot to kill Lazarus. There are good reasons for including these episodes. The anointing is introduced already in 11:2, while the raising of Lazarus is recalled in 12:10–11, which suggests that these two episodes are to be read together (so also Mourlon-Beernaert 1981; North 2001: 124). The same three central characters appear throughout these episodes but nowhere else in the Gospel. Lee further shows that the narrative follows a chiastic structure around the raising of Lazarus (11:38–44) in which the illness and death of Lazarus (11:1–16) match the plot to kill him (12:9–11); the conversation with Martha (11:17–27) is paired with Jesus' anointing by Mary (12:1–8); and the conversion of many 'Jews' who are with Mary (11:45–57) forms a counterpart to the earlier conversation with Mary and the 'Jews' (11:28–37).[4] For the purposes here it is helpful to work with the more extended narrative precisely because it thereby includes all of the references to Martha. At the same time Martha virtually disappears from view after 11:39, reappearing only once in 12:2. In effect the major concern will therefore be with the narrative of 11:1–44.

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[3] Bultmann (1941) terms these two parts ‘the Revelation of the Glory before the world’ and ‘the Revelation of the Glory before the community.’

2.2 The Story

The story proceeds in seven scenes (Lee 1994; 2002; Thyen 2005: 511; see also Moloney 2003). The first recounts the illness and death of Lazarus (11:1–16) and includes a discussion between Jesus and the disciples. The second and third scenes narrate the encounters of Jesus with Martha (11:17–27) and Mary (11:28–37) respectively. Scene four recounts the raising of Lazarus (11:38–44). The response to this miracle is reported in the next scene (11:45–57): it leads to the conversion of some Jews and the plotting of others to kill Jesus. Scene six describes the anointing of Jesus by Mary (12:1–8) while the final scene concerns the plot to kill Lazarus (12:9–11).

2.2.1 *Introducing Martha*

While the story is now known as 'the raising of Lazarus,' Lazarus plays almost no part in it and never speaks. His entire role consists in falling sick, dying and exiting the tomb on command (11:1, 11, 44). He is present at the dinner where Jesus is anointed, but does not speak (12:1–2) and while many are said to come to believe because of him (12:9–11) this faith likewise is not linked to any action or word of Lazarus but entirely to Jesus' action of having raised him from the dead. Lazarus appears curiously more like an object than a character in the narrative. It is also striking that he is introduced as an unknown character (Ἦν δέ τις… 11:1; cf. Jn 5:5), unlike Mary and Martha, who are used to locate him (11:1, Culpepper 1983: 215–216; see also Hearon 2004b: 178–179). Martha and her village Bethany thus appear as known entities in the Johannine community.

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[4] Lee thereby also eliminates the curiosity observed by others, that solely in this narrative the sign occurs at the end, rather than in the middle or at the beginning of the story (so, for example, Stibbe 1994: 41–42). The inclusion of 11:45–12:8 reveals that here, too, the sign occurs in the middle of the narrative.

The fact that all three characters are named is unusual within the Johannine sign narratives and sets this group apart (so Hakola 1999: 234). In all previous instances beneficiaries of a miracle have remained nameless, even where they play a significant role or participate in extended dialogue (compare the participants at the wedding, 2:1–11; the royal official and his son, 4:46–54; the man healed on the Sabbath, 5:1–15; and the blind man, 9:1–41). In the opening of the narrative Mary is named first: Lazarus is “from the village of Mary and Martha her sister” (11:1). Moreover Mary is specified as “the one who anointed the Lord” (ἡ ἀλείψασα τὸν κύριον, 11:2). Since the anointing has not yet been recounted, this curious reference has been interpreted as a sign of a dislocation within the Gospel of John, as an intertextual reference to Synoptic anointing narratives (Busse 1992: 300; Thyen 1992a: 2035; 2005: 513; Kitzberger 1995: 571–572), as a proleptic reference to the subsequent narrative (12:1–8 Lee 1994: 193; Stibbe 1994) or simply as a narrative ‘gap’ (Moloney 2003: 510). The notice is significant in linking this narrative to the subsequent narrative of the anointing and thus also to the passion of Jesus. Moloney (2003: 510) takes it as a sign that Mary will play an important role, though if the notice primarily serves the purpose of linking the narrative to subsequent narratives, this need not necessarily be the case. For in that case it is attached to Mary because she plays the central role in the anointing narrative, not necessarily because she will play the central role here.

The terms ἀδελφή and ἀδελφός are significant, appearing no less than ten times in 11:1–39. Conversely the terms occur rarely in the rest of the Gospel: three times in reference to Andrew and Simon Peter (1:40–41; 6:8), four times in relation to the siblings of Jesus (2:12; 7:3, 5, 10) and once identifying the sister of Jesus’ mother (19:25). Since the ἀδελφοί of Jesus are clearly a group distinct from his disciples (7:3–10), and the “sister of his mother” (19:25) also appears distinct from other women who would presumably be included as disciples (Mary of Clopas and Mary Magdalene), it is probable that the term here intends to designate a blood-relationship rather than a relationship within the faith community. The word ἀδελφοί does denote members of the community in 1 John (2:9–11; 3:10–17; 4:20–21; 5:16), alongside other terms such as ‘beloved’ (ἀγαπητοί, 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11); ‘children’ (τεκνία, 2:1, 12, 28; 3:1, 2, 7, 10, 18; 4:1; 5:2, 21; παιδία, 2:14, 18); 'fathers' (πατέρες, 2:13–14) and 'young' (νεανίσκοι, 2:14).[5] This familial language of 1 John appears also in the Gospel: both τεκνία (Jn 13:33) and παιδία (Jn 21:5) occur as designations of the faith community, while ἀγαπητοί may derive from the Beloved Disciple (see Jn 14–15 where the community are designated φίλοι). While the terms ἀδελφή and ἀδελφός thus imply familial relations, they also evoke the faith community (so also Schneiders 2003: 105). The frequency with which they appear highlights their significance and further emphasises the community aspect of the narrative. This story is to be read not simply as an event occurring to one particular family, but as a story about the community.[6]

Not only are Martha, Mary and Lazarus designated as sisters/brother, but they are described as "those whom Jesus loved." This is said three times of Lazarus: by the sisters (Κύριε, ἴδε ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ, 11:3), by Jesus (Λάζαρος ὁ φίλος ἡμῶν κεκοίμηται, 11:11) and by the Jews (Ἴδε πῶς ἐφίλει αὐτόν, 11:36). It is also said of all three siblings: ἠγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον (11:5). Significantly, Martha is here named first while her sister remains nameless. Thus the order of priority from 11:1–2 has been reversed. Whereas 11:2 had placed Mary centre-stage, this naming suggests that Martha will take the principal role (so Rochais 1981: 118). The designation of Lazarus as the beloved has led some to find here the identity of the 'beloved disciple' who will play such a significant role in the second half of the Gospel (see, for example, Thyen 1992a; Baltz 1996). Yet "John 11 shows little interest in Lazarus" (Moloney 2003: 512). It is the sisters, rather, who appear as key figures and the introduction suggests that it is they, rather than Lazarus, who are familiar to the audience (for an alternative view see Kim 2004: 152). If Lazarus were the 'Beloved Disciple' of the Johannine community one would rather expect the reverse. Like the emphasis on ἀδελφή/ἀδελφός, the focus on Lazarus, Martha and Mary as the beloved of Jesus serves to place the narrative firmly in the context of the faith community. The death of Lazarus is not simply the death of anyone; it is the death of a beloved one, a death in the community. In that community, and in this narrative, Martha assumes a key role.

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[5] Παιδία, νεανίσκοι and πατέρες might well be designation of recognised τάγμα in the congregation with corresponding roles (Spicq 1969) though both παιδία and τεκνία are used as designations for the whole congregation (παιδία only in 2:18). In this connection it could be significant that the Johannine account of the foot washing does not include the Matthean injunction against calling anyone father (Mtt 23:9).

[6] Crawford (2003) attests the use of 'mother,' 'sister' and 'elder' as titles for women in second temple Judaism and early Christianity denoting status and roles within the community. Coloe (2000) argues that 'the household' (οἰκία) functions as a metaphor for the community in John (see also Coloe 2001: 160–162). This too suggests reading the narrative also at the level of the faith community, for in 11:31 the οἰκία appears, intriguingly, in connection to some Jews who are "in the household with Mary." This also suggests that Mary's previous "sitting in the house" (11:20) might have a non-literal meaning. On the interpretation of the household as a category in early Christianity see also Levine (2003). On the use of sibling language see also Aasgaard (1997; 2004) who deals predominantly with Pauline literature, however, and who considers the sibling language in relation to Martha and Mary as denoting blood ties (2004: 65–66).

2.2.2 *The confession of Martha*

Upon hearing of Lazarus' illness Jesus remains where he is for two days. When he then returns to Bethany, he finds Lazarus already dead four days (11:17).[7] It is noted that Bethany is close to Jerusalem and that many of 'the Jews' have come "to console Martha and Mary about their brother" (11:18–19). The role of the Jews in the Gospel of John has been extensively discussed by others (Bowman 1975; von Wahlde 1982; Tanzer 1991). Here two brief comments will suffice.

First, it is intriguing that the Jews appear "with Mary" in the rest of the narrative: οἱ... Ἰουδαῖοι οἱ ὄντες μετ' αὐτῆς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ ("the Jews, the ones being with her in the household," 11:31),[8] τοὺς συνελθόντας αὐτῇ Ἰουδαίους (literally: "the having come with her Jews," 11:33), πολλοὶ...ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, οἱ ἐλθόντες πρὸς τὴν Μαριὰμ ("many of the Jews, the ones having come to Mary," 11:45). Each time these Jews are closely (and clumsily) tied to Mary. Clearly Mary and these Jews belong together in a way in which Martha and the Jews do not. How one interprets this will depend largely on the way in which one interprets the Jews in the rest of the Gospel (see von Wahlde 1982). Tanzer (1991) suggests that one intended audience of the Gospel are Jews who have as yet failed to confess their Christian faith openly and that this audience is reflected (and addressed) in such characters as Nicodemus (see also Moloney 2003: 505–508). If this is so, then Mary likewise appears as a character within the Gospel with whom this section of the audience is expected to identify.[9] Given the ambiguity, if not outright hostility, with which 'the Jews' are characterised in the Gospel, the lack of association of Martha with them may reflect positively on her, making her less ambiguous than other characters that are associated with them, such as Nicodemus. Conversely the fact that the Jews who come to believe (11:45) are 'with Mary' rather than with Martha may reflect negatively on her (so Moloney 2003: 521).

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[7] This verse has been used to argue for the use of multiple sources by Burkett (1994). For while 11:17 suggests Jesus has arrived in Bethany (and even found Lazarus in the tomb), the subsequent encounter with Martha clearly occurs outside of Bethany, as does the encounter with Mary.

[8] Compare the similar construction in 9:40 and 12:17.

Second, this verse has been used by Baltz (1996) to argue that Martha, Mary and Lazarus represent real historical persons, the children of Boethus known from rabbinic writings (see Strack and Billerbeck 1969: 2.184–185). In his opinion Lazarus is to be identified with Eleazar who was high priest from 4 BCE to sometime before 6 CE. For Balz, 11:19 reflects a historical event: the leaders of Jerusalem have come to pay their respects to the family of such an important figure. This suggestion is implausible because of its undifferentiated reading of the Jews. While 'the Jews' are certainly regularly interpreted as the Jewish leadership, precisely in this story such an identification is rendered difficult by the fact that some of them are said to come to faith while others go to the Jewish leaders ("the Pharisees," 11:46) who subsequently begin to plot against Jesus (11:47–53). Thus 'the Jews' in John 11:45–46 are explicitly *not* identified with the leaders in Jerusalem. Nor does Baltz consider the possibility that the familial language in the narrative could be read symbolically rather than literally. Nevertheless the thesis of Baltz does draw attention to an interesting literary parallel. If Martha Boethus was well-known among Jewish (and hence also among early Christian) circles, be it as an historical figure or as a figure in rabbinic writings, there is a possibility that narratives connected to one woman were associated with, or influenced by, stories about the other.

Martha, upon hearing that Jesus is coming, "met him" (ὑπήντησεν αὐτῷ, 11:20). Ὑπαντάω is used for the reception of a ruler, and thus also in John 12:13, 18 (Kremer 1985: 64 n. 78).[10] The verb also has a hostile sense (Danker 2000: 1029) and given the disparate interpretations Martha has received it is worth considering whether this sense could apply here. Does Martha go out to 'meet' Jesus, or to 'oppose' him? Given her first words to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (11:21), either sense appears possible, particularly if this statement is read not so much as a statement of faith or expression of grief (so Kremer 1985: 65; Thyen 2005: 522) but as an accusation (so Byrne 1990: 60; Kim 2004: 149). This negative reading seems considerably less likely, however, not only given the recurrence of the word in the context of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, but particularly in light of Martha's subsequent affirmation, "but even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him" (καὶ νῦν οἶδα ὅτι ὅσα ἂν αἰτήσῃ τὸν θεὸν δώσει σοι ὁ θεός, 11:22). North (2001: 106–114) argues convincingly that this statement reflects a logion from Johannine tradition, in effect the Johannine version of the well-known 'ask and it will be given' logion of the Synoptics. The logion reappears numerous times in Johannine Gospel and epistle (Jn 14:13–14; 15:7, 16; 1 Jn 3:21–23; 5:13–16) and in its entirety on the lips of Jesus in John 16:23b-24 where it is introduced by the formula ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν "which can serve as a tradition signal" (North 2001: 109).

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[9] Mary and Martha do appear in patristic literature as types of the Jewish and Gentile church. This typology appears in connection with Luke 10:38–42 and is therefore discussed in connection with this text. Significantly Origen, who uses this typology, connects Martha, not Mary, with 'the synagogue of circumcision' (see Csányi 1960: 24–27; Bumpus 2000: 37–42). Loisy interprets Martha as the converted Jews, Mary as the Gentiles, and the two together the whole human race (Kremer 1985: 72), but appears to be reading the familiar patristic (Lukan) typology into the text, failing to notice that the Jews appear precisely *not* with Martha.

If this is so, then Martha expresses the Johannine faith tradition here and not simply "an idea which is in accord with Jewish piety" (so Schnackenburg 1982–87: 2.329). Nor is it then accurate to limit this statement to a belief "in Jesus as a God-directed miracle worker" (so Moloney 2003: 515) any more than one would conclude that Jesus is counselling such a belief in God as miracle worker in 16:23–24. Moloney has rightly pointed out that Martha confesses her faith not once but three times (11:21, 24, 27; see also Brown 1966: 434). I disagree with his conclusion, however, that she "gets it wrong each time she articulates her beliefs" (Moloney 2003: 514–515). At issue in the whole narrative is the problem of death in the community of eternal life, as Schneiders (1987) so eloquently phrases it (see also Schneiders

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[10] Kremer raises—only to dismiss—the possibility that ὑπαντάω could have eschatological implications in view of 1 Thess 4:17. Yet given the context of the verb in a narrative dealing precisely with the resurrection (of both Jesus and the faithful), this connotation seems not impossible, particularly if, as is argued below, Martha is the carrier of Johannine faith. Might not the verb ὑπαντάω have been chosen precisely because the faithful Martha 'meets the Lord' who is about to raise her brother, just as all the faithful will 'meet the Lord' in the resurrection (1 Thess 4:17)?

2003: 171–183). Consistently in the Gospel Jesus is presented as life (1:4; 6:27–35) and as the one who gives life (4:10, 14; 5:21, 40; 10:28; 17:2). Moreover, this life is presented as already given (3:36; 5:24–26; 6:47–51). Consequently Schneiders is surely correct in her assessment that death and the presence of Jesus are incompatible and that death therefore becomes a theological problem in the community. This is the problem which the evangelist is addressing in the narrative, articulated most concisely in the question posed by some of the Jews: "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" (11:37). Martha's first speech reflects two responses to this problem that are consistent with Johannine faith: that the presence of the Lord would have prevented the death, and that those who ask in Jesus' name receive.[11]

Martha is often given credit for taking the initiative in going to meet Jesus (Schnackenburg 1982–87: 2.329). Indeed, some have felt a need to rescue Mary from the blame that is assumed to attach to her remaining at home (Kitzberger 1995).[12] Conversely this 'initiative' of Martha is interpreted negatively by Moloney who suggests that she is (inappropriately) "determining the direction of the discussion" (2003: 513). According to Moloney, Jesus "corrects [Martha's] view by announcing that Lazarus will rise" (11:23).[13] Martha accepts Jesus' announcement that Lazarus will rise again (11:24) but receives little credit for this from Moloney, who would rather have her give Jesus "space to explain what he means" (1994: 475). This is a curiously historicising reading; one gets the impression of Martha as the impatient woman who interrupts the conversation. But of course Martha is a character in a narrative; she says only what the author has given her to say. To read her in this way fails to observe that the author regularly uses such a dialogue style to expound his theology (compare, for example, 3:1–22; 11:7–16).

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[11] So also Schneiders, who proposes that Martha here

> expresses…the real but inadequately enlightened faith of the community, which must be purified by a new and deeper encounter with Jesus in the crisis event of physical death. (2003: 105)

[12] While such rescuing might be necessary for a twentieth-century audience, one wonders whether it would apply for Kitzberger's chosen "female first reader, i.e. a woman in the Johannine community" (1995: 569). Twycross (1996) uses the same verse to argue that Mary was married (to Jesus) and his the argument reveals, if nothing else, at least that 'sitting at home' can be interpreted as socially entirely appropriate within its cultural context.

[13] While Moloney reads Jesus' response as an announcement of the miracle he is about to perform, it is by no means clear that the statement "your brother will rise" (11:23) is to be interpreted as a prediction of an imminent resuscitation rather than a final resurrection (Schnackenburg 1982–87: 2.330; Smith 1999: 222; Thyen 2005: 523–524).

Moloney further observes that "repeatedly in the Fourth Gospel, the 'we know' of prior certainties about the identity of Jesus are mistaken (see 1.41, 45; 3.2; 4.25; 6.42)" (2003: 514). He reads Martha's "I know" (οἶδα) in analogy to the knowledge of Nicodemus who 'knows' that Jesus comes from God (3:2) and of the woman at the well who 'knows' that Messiah is coming (4:25). This is an apt observation. Striking is also the frequency with which οἶδα appears on the lips of Jesus, in contrast to others who claim to know but do not fully understand. Yet the comparison with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman again raises the question who Martha represents in the Johannine world. Nicodemus clearly represents the Jews (and specifically those who secretly believe in Jesus) while the Samaritan woman explicitly represents Samaritans. In both cases it appears that the author uses the character to dialogue with certain groups or traditions. Who, then, is Martha?

Here, again, I contend that she represents the Johannine believer.[14] Martha's second assertion, "I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day" (11:24) reflects theological truths affirmed elsewhere in the Johannine Gospel; indeed, this is precisely what Jesus had announced in the 'Bread of Life discourse' earlier (6:39–40, 44, 54). Thus, while some have supposed that Martha is simply expressing a generalised Jewish understanding of the resurrection (so Brown 1966: 434; Moloney 2003: 513; Kim 2004: 147–151), it appears rather that she responds with Johannine tradition.[15] She knows, as all Johannine Christians are certainly expected to, that those who believe in the Son will be raised on the last day. The answer Martha gives does not ultimately satisfy the evangelist as a solution to the problem. Nevertheless, it is surely accurate, as Rochais (1981: 118) has argued, that Martha takes the role that the disciples take in the subsequent revelation discourses.[16] Unlike Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, she is a Johannine 'insider.'

Martha has named the problem: Lazarus would not have died had Jesus been present. She has been told that he will rise again and has affirmed the Johannine faith in a resurrection. All of this serves as a set-up for the self-revelation of Jesus which is at the heart of the dialogue:

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[14] See also Esler and Piper who have recently argued that Martha, Mary and Lazarus are "prototypical Christ-followers" (2006: 18).

[15] A similar reading is offered by Thyen (2005: 527).

[16] The male disciples do not appear in Bethany at all; they disappear from view after 11:16. It is only Jesus who is said to come to Bethany in 11:17.

> I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. (11:25–26)[17]

The crux of the matter is Jesus' question (addressed to Martha and the audience): "Do you believe this?" to which Martha responds (11:27): "Yes Lord, I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one coming into the world" (Ναί, κύριε· ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος). Many commentators find here "the most fully developed confession of Johannine faith in the Fourth Gospel" (Schneiders 1987: 53; so also Brown 1975: 693–694; Schnackenburg 1982–87: 2.332; Kremer 1985: 70; Seim 1987: 71; Conway 1999: 145; Hearon 2004b: 179) because it echoes the articulation of Johannine faith in 20:31,

> these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), and that by believing you may have life in his name

Smith (1999: 223) perceives a developing faith, the application of traditional titles to Jesus which will be given new meanings in what follows. Schneiders distinguishes "personal spiritual transformation" from "theological assent" and suggests Martha's "response has initiated in her a new life which is the horizon of all further experience" (1987: 53). Barrett observes "the creed-like form of Martha's words" (1978: 397), citing also Bornkamm's suggestion that Martha's words are a baptismal confession. Brown (1975: 693) suggests Martha has here been deliberately given a role traditionally associated with Peter, making her a disciple of nearly as much status as the Beloved Disciple.

Conversely, Moloney suggests that Martha's confession is yet another example of her failure to understand. In support of his reading Moloney argues that "full grammatical weight" must be given to the perfect tense

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[17] Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή· ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ κἂν ἀποθάνῃ ζήσεται, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ζῶν καὶ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. Smith notes that "the Greek preserves a Hebrew idiom that is not reflected in the English" in which εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα means "into the age to come" (1999: 222). Thus Schnackenburg translates: "He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall not die to eternity" (1982–87: 2.331).

(πεπίστευκα) which opens her confession. This perfect tense "indicates that her coming to faith *preceded* the words of Jesus in vv. 25–6" (2003: 513; so also 1994: 477). Martha responds with a faith she has always held and as such is not responding to the self-revelation of Jesus and to the question he had asked her.

> She has responded in terms that can be regarded as acceptable messianic categories: the Christ, the son of God (see Ps 2.7; 2 Sam 7.14), the one who is to come into the world. Earlier uses of these expressions (see 1.49; 6.14) have already reflected the limited faith of those who confess their belief in these terms. (Moloney 2003: 514)

Moloney's reading of Martha falters on a number of points. First, the perfect tense is also used by Peter in his earlier confession, "we have believed and known that you are the holy one of God" (ἡμεῖς πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ, 6:69). In this case Moloney does not use the perfect tense to discount the confession as something Peter had always believed and therefore a failure to accept the foregoing self-revelation of Jesus in the Bread of Life discourse; rather he considers it an expression of "true Johannine faith" (2003: 508). At the very least this difference in the treatment of comparable grammatical constructions requires explanation. More plausible is Kremer's explanation of the perfect tense as an expression of certainty of faith: "ich habe Glauben gefunden…ich glaube fest" (1985: 69; cf. Jn 20:29).[18] Hearon suggests the perfect tense "underscores the constative aspect of Martha's words: I have believed and I continue to believe" (2004b: 177). Barrett (1978: 397) takes the perfect tense as a formula introducing a primitive creed, both here and in 6:69.

It is true that Martha's confession repeats affirmations that have already been made previously in the Gospel: Jesus is the Christ (1:41), the Son of God (1:49), the one coming into the world (6:14).[19] However, Moloney's suggestion that "earlier uses of these expressions…have already reflected the limited faith of those who confess their belief in these terms" (2003: 514) warrants careful examination. Moloney argues that the context must determine the meaning. John 20:31, "the climactic statement, from the evangelist, of the purpose of the writing of the Gospel," differs radically, he suggests, from "an answer from a character in the narrative, beginning with a perfect tense, to a question from Jesus that has no direct relationship to the answer given" (2003: 514 n. 33). Also "crucial" to Moloney is the association of ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος with "Christ" and "Son of God" in 11:27. For not only does this phrase not occur in 20:31 (which lists only "the Christ, the Son of God"), but it "is clearly a misunderstanding of Jesus" in 6:14 (ibid.).

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[18] Busse translates the same way and notes that here, as elsewhere in the story, the perspective shifts between the pre-Easter situation of what is narrated and post-Easter theological reflection (1992: 301–302), for if Jesus is really the life-giving resurrection for others, he must first have overcome death himself.

[19] The question whether this last phrase should be considered a Christological title (so Barrett 1978; cf. Rev 1:4, 8) or not (so Schnackenburg 1982–87; Kremer 1985) need not concern us further here.

Against this reading it must be observed, first, that the crowds of 6:14 do not confess Jesus as "the Christ, the one coming into the world," but rather as "the prophet, the one coming into the world" (ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον). As such the confession of the crowd differs from that of Martha: they recognise 'the Prophet' she recognises 'the Christ, the Son of God.' Even if one takes 6:14 as a misunderstanding, this misunderstanding might consist not in ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον but rather in the identity of the one who is coming into the world. Second, ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος picks up an idea reflected in the prologue (1:9). As such, the phrase itself can certainly not be dubbed 'a misunderstanding of Jesus,' unless one is willing to entertain the possibility that the narrator of the Gospel also participates in this misunderstanding. Schnackenburg reads both texts positively, the phrase 'the one coming into the world' serving in 6:14 "as a conscious Johannine formulation designed to interpret the sign in faith" (1982–87: 2.333).

What, then, of Moloney's other observation, that the titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' have already appeared in 1:41 and 49, where they are marked as an incomplete understanding by Jesus' response (1:50–51)? Moloney's caution that context determines meaning points in a different direction. For the context of Martha's confession is the story of the raising of Lazarus which functions structurally as a key turning point in the Gospel. Moreover, the setting in Bethany connects this narrative with John the Baptist. John is said to baptise in Bethany across the Jordan (1:28) and this location has been evoked again in 10:40. Attempts to locate 'Bethany across the Jordan' (e.g., Riesner 1987) appear misguided, for the location is significant at the level of symbol rather than geography. Jesus' return 'to the place where John was first baptising' is a return to the place where the Gospel first opened.[20]

The first half of the Gospel opens in Bethany with the witness of John the Baptist, who announces the arrival of "the Lamb of God" (1:29, 36), a phrase which provides an important interpretive key for the Johannine passion. The confession of Martha functions in the same way. The second half of the Gospel likewise opens in Bethany with a witness who draws attention to the identity of Jesus and provides an interpretive key for the passion.[21]

Two other aspects of the narrative support such a reading of Martha's confession. First, Martha confesses her faith in response to a word and not a deed (Kremer 1985: 69; Schneiders 2003: 106–107). As such she is one of the blessed who have not (yet) seen and still believe (20:29; compare 4:48). Earlier Jesus had expressed his hope that the disciples may believe (11:15). Martha's confession is a fulfillment of that hope. Second, her confession is left to stand; it is not corrected by Jesus or the narrator (Conway 1999: 145). At this point in the narrative, then, Martha does appear as the exemplary Johannine believer.

One final comment is in order. Immediately after making her confession Martha returns to her sister and "secretly" (λάθρᾳ) tells her, "the teacher is here and is calling you" (ὁ διδάσκαλος πάρεστιν καὶ φωνεῖ σε, 11:28). Moloney considers both the 'secret report' and the use of διδάσκαλος indicators of "Martha's lack of faith" (2003: 515; similarly Smith 1999: 224). It is difficult to make a definitive judgment on the use of λάθρᾳ since this is the only time it occurs in John. Certainly secrecy is an issue in the Gospel. But it is always described using the adjective κρυπτός and its cognates (7:4, 10; 18:20; 19:38). Martha, conversely, does not inform her sister ἐν κρυπτῷ. The translation of λάθρᾳ as "privately" (as in the NRSV) retains this distinction. Moreover, given the ambiguity that surrounds 'the Jews' in the Gospel, and particularly in John 11, it is also plausible that the 'private report' intends to say more about the Jews who are with Mary than about the faith of Martha.

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[20] See also Resseguie (2001: 86–92) who identifies the tomb of Lazarus as the spatial centre of the narrative and Rakotoharintsifa (2000) who suggests 'Bethany across the Jordan' serves a spatio-temporal function, delimiting the public ministry of Jesus.

[21] Incidentally, while not using the phrase 'the one coming into the world,' the Baptist uses a similar expression: ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος (1:15, 27).

Equally the use of διδάσκαλος does not imply the 'lack of faith' that Moloney claims. If one argues, as does Moloney, that this term and the Hebrew-Aramaic transliterated ῥαββί "always reflect an expression of belief conditioned by religious and cultural in circumstances" (2003: 515–516), then how is one to interpret the appearance of both of these terms in 20:16? Significantly Moloney fails to include this verse in his discussion, despite the fact that the collocation of both ῥαββουνι and διδάσκαλε would seem to make it an obvious point of comparison with John 11 (compare 11:8, 28). I know of no interpreter who claims that Mary Magdalene reveals a 'lack of faith' by addressing the risen Jesus as ῥαββουνι. I contend the reverse, that the appearance of the titles in 20:16 indicates that these terms were applied to the exalted Jesus in the Johannine community and therefore do not contradict in any way the Christological titles which Martha has used in 11:27. Such a use of διδάσκαλος is also attested in 13:13–14 (ὑμεῖς φωνεῖτέ με ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ ὁ κύριος, καὶ καλῶς λέγετε, εἰμὶ γάρ) and is attested as a Christological title in a number of later Christian texts (*Mart. Pol.* 17.3; *Ep. Diog.* 9.6; Ignatius *Eph.* 15.1).[22] Thus the subsequent return of Martha to her sister to report the arrival of 'the teacher' 'privately' indicates neither a lack of faith, nor a failure to understand on her part.

2.2.3 *"He stinks": Martha at the raising of Lazarus*

Martha next appears in the narrative in 11:39. The intervening encounter of Jesus with Mary serves (so Schneiders 2003) to bring her companions, the Jews, onto the scene (who will then report Jesus to the authorities) and expresses Jesus' community with the grieving:

> Mary's function in this narrative is to weep, and Jesus joins her in her sorrow.... Jesus, in his most fully human moment in the Fourth Gospel, legitimates human agony in the face of death. (2003: 181)[23]

Haenchen considers Mary "virtually...the shadow of her sister" (1984: 2.65). Brodie observes in her behavior "a crescendo of lamentation—a direct contrast to Martha's crescendo of believing" (1993a: 395). He relates the meaning of the anger and tears of Jesus to the self-emptying of Jesus in his death.

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[22] Kremer (1985: 71) likewise holds that the title 'teacher' signifies high regard. See also Brown (1966: 74) for the suggestion that the Gospel of John is one of the earliest texts to use *Rabbi* as a form of address.

[23] Scholarly discussion has centered around the interpretation of ἐμβριμάομαι and the interpretation of Jesus' anger, as well as his tears. On this see Keener (2003: 2.845–848); Haenchen (1984: 2.66).

> The death of Jesus will be accompanied both by the handing over of the spirit and by the outflow of blood and water (19:30, 34). There is a literal emptying. Given that the Lazarus story, from start to finish (11:2, 53), is so closely connected to the death of Jesus, it is appropriate that in this story also, this 'rehearsal' of Jesus' passion-and-glorification, there should be an initial process of self-emptying. The burst of spirit-disturbing anger and the flow of tears suggest such a process. (ibid.: 396)

The Jesus who needs to ask, where have you laid him? (11:34) is not the knowing Jesus of the opening of the narrative (11:11–14), the "Lord" who is invited to "come and see" (11:34) is a long way from the one who invited others to "come and see" (1:39).

> He has, therefore, been emptied of his sovereign status and knowledge. And it is at that point that the self-emptying takes a further and more conclusive form—he bursts into tears.
>
> The fact that the tears represent a profound self-emptying does not mean that they were not an indication that Jesus loved Lazarus. They were—and the Jews, in seeing them, were right in detecting that love (v.36). But it was no superficial love, no mood of the moment. It was a love of complete self-giving. (ibid.)

Arriving at the tomb, Jesus asks that the stone be removed from it. Martha, "the sister of the dead man" (ἡ ἀδελφὴ τοῦ τετελευτηκότος), comments, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days" (Κύριε, ἤδη ὄζει, τεταρταῖος γάρ ἐστιν, 11:39). This identification of Martha is striking, since her relationship with Lazarus has been specified several times already (11:19, 21, 23). Moreover, the name appears as if inserted later into an account in which both the dead person and his sister were nameless. Martha's remark that Lazarus stinks has been interpreted as a demonstration of her lack of faith (so Moloney 1994: 490; 2003: 520) or of Lazarus' truly dead state (so Smith 1999: 226),[24] as an expression of her fear that Jesus may be too late (Thyen 2005: 529), or simply as a literary device "to give Jesus an opportunity to answer" (so Schnackenburg 1982–87: 2.338).

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[24] Popular Jewish belief held that the soul hovered near the corpse for three days (Brown 1966: 424). This idea is known to Origen (*Commentary on the Gospel of John* 28.9.71).

Since John 20:30–31 affirms unequivocally the necessity of signs as a means of engendering faith ("these [signs] have been written that you may come to believe…"), Thyen (2005: 536) rightly observes that Martha's exclamation at the tomb does not invalidate her faith, but expresses precisely the testing of her faith which has not yet seen the sign. In fact, it may be misleading to focus primarily on a supposed link between Martha's exclamation about the smell and her own faith. Harvey's (2001a) analysis of the cultural symbolism which attaches to smell in the ancient world suggests quite a different interpretation. She observes that

> Mediterranean cultures shared a common understanding of olfactory meanings—a system of olfactory codes that ordered human life within the cosmos.… Christians followed the inherited patterns in understanding odors as key religious signifiers: fragrant or foul, smells could be used to demarcate the sacred from the profane, the holy from the demonic, and redeemed creation from fallen order. (2001a: 90–91)

Rather than a reference to Martha, much less to her faith, the comment about the stench serves to signify something about Lazarus. It is he who stinks, not she.

> To be mortal was to reek of sin; rottenness and putrefaction were mortality's nature, revolting stink its unmistakable mark. Wherever such olfactory sensations were encountered, there evil was located. (ibid.: 92)

Martha recognises the stench of mortality and evil. Her comment serves to demarcate "the sacred from the profane, the holy from the demonic…redeemed creation from fallen order." If that is the primary meaning which attaches to foul smell, it is hard to see why the identification and naming of the odour should also in itself signify a failure to believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, or that he is able to raise one who stinks, whether in the immediate future or in the final resurrection.

Since the story of the raising of Lazarus is linked with the story of the anointing that follows it, Martha's comment ἤδη ὄζει should also be read in conjunction with the observation that "the house was filled with the perfume" (ἡ δὲ οἰκία ἐπληρώθη ἐκ τῆς ὀσμῆς τοῦ μύρου, 12:3). Mary's μύρον is explicitly designated as intended for the day of Jesus' burial (12:7). Martha's comment draws attention to both the parallel and the difference: at the tomb of Lazarus there is the smell of death. In the house—and at the burial of Jesus—there is a different smell, the perfume of life. Martha's comment, and the choice of character for making the comment help to create this parallel. To read into the comment a measure of Martha's faith (or rather lack thereof) is unnecessary and inconsistent with her characterisation in the rest of the narrative.[25]

These links between the raising of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus are significant, not only for the interpretation of the story, but also for the interpretation of Martha, and therefore bear much closer examination.

2.2.4 *Links between the raising of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus*

In 10:38 Jesus suggests that the Jews who did not believe his words should at least believe his deeds. Ultimately the passion itself is the deed which is in view, but the narrative which immediately follows this statement is the raising of Lazarus, by which some Jews will come to believe (11:45). There are a number of links between this narrative and the passion. The story is set in Bethany, a place which occurs in the Synoptics only in the context of the passion (Mt 26:6; Mk 11:1; Lk 19:29). In each case the passion starts in Bethany. It is the place of the anointing, which is explicitly linked to Jesus' burial in all the Gospels (Mtt 26:12; Mk 14:8; Jn 12:7) except Luke, who has omitted this narrative in favour of another anointing story much earlier (Lk 7:37–50). The closeness of Bethany to Jerusalem which is highlighted in 11:18 likewise evokes Jesus' passion: being 'near Jerusalem' Jesus is near the place of his own death (Kremer 1985: 64).[26] Bethany and the anointing thus both signal the start of the passion and this link is made even more explicit by the proleptic reference to the anointing in John 11:2.

The emphasis on ἀσθένεια likewise points towards the passion. The ἀσθένεια of Lazarus is mentioned no less than five times in the opening six verses of John 11. Blank observes that in John ἀσθένεια is linked with death, is a sign for the proximity of death and for human existence in the shadow of death ("Die Krankheit ist selbst ein Anzeichen für die Todesnähe, für das Dasein des Menschen im Schatten des Todes"; in Busse 1992: 299). Precisely the comment that "this illness is not unto death" (Αὕτη ἡ ἀσθένεια οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς θάνατον, 11:3) implies a perception that normally ἀσθένεια is 'unto death.' Moreover, the second half of the comment, that it is for the Glory of God, "that the Son of God may be glorified by it" (ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ δι' αὐτῆς), evokes the passion, the means by which the Father glorifies the Son (13:31–32; 17:1). In naming both death and glory in 11:3,

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[25] Familiarity with the Lukan story of Martha and Mary might tempt (but mislead) one into reading Martha and Mary as contrasting rather than complementary figures. Esler and Piper's (2006) analysis of Lazarus, Martha and Mary as prototypical of the community of those whom Jesus loved suggests that the three characters are to be read as a group, rather than set over against each other.

[26] That Bethany serves to evoke the passion is supported also by its appearance in connection with John the Baptist. For immediately after locating John in Bethany, the text narrates his exclamation, "Here is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29), a comment whose trajectory ends in the passion and in the death of Christ at the precise moment at which the Passover lambs are slain (19:14–16; Brown 1966: 62).

> Jesus, the most authoritative character in the narrative, has set the tone for all that follows by raising two crucial themes associated with the Johannine understanding of the crucifixion. (Moloney 2003: 510)

The story is thus set firmly in the context of the passion (so also Thyen 2005: 514).

The close links to the passion and resurrection are evoked also by close linguistic parallels in the two stories. In both there is a tomb (μνημεῖον) closed by a stone (λίθος, 11:38; 20:1) and in both there is reference to the cloth placed over the face (σουδάριον, 11:44; 20:7). These similarities serve to highlight a key difference between the narratives: Jesus finds Lazarus in the tomb, unlike the women who fail to find Jesus (Kremer 1985: 63).[27] In both narratives there is a woman disciple weeping (11:33; 20:11, 13, 15), indeed in both cases there is a weeping Mary. "Both weep over a dead man at a tomb;" observes Good (2005: 7), "both are consoled (11:31, 33; 20:11, 15); both accrue followers (11:32, 45; 20:18); both experience resurrection (11:43, 45; 20:16)." The links between the two narratives are striking and Schneiders rightly refers to

> the prolepsis of the paschal mystery constituted by chapters 11 and 12. In these two hinge chapters Jesus is symbolically executed by the decision of the authorities (11:47–53), symbolically buried in the anointing scene (12:1–8), and symbolically glorified by the triumphal entry into Jerusalem which is explicitly attributed to his victory over death in the raising of Lazarus (12:17–18). (1987: 45)

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[27] Hakola (1999: 233) notes as a further difference between the two texts that Lazarus needs to be freed from his σουδάριον, while Jesus frees himself.

The link between the raising of Lazarus and the passion and resurrection of Christ are highly significant for the interpretation of Martha, for she too is thereby linked to the passion and resurrection. Once again this raises the question what difference it makes that it is Martha who is named here. Or rather, it raises the question why the author chooses Martha and Mary as the women at the tomb of Lazarus. That there should be women at that tomb is to be expected, since women are essential to the empty tomb narratives of the canonical Gospels (Mtt 28:1–10; Mk 16:1–8; Lk 24:1–11; Jn 20:1–18). Given the author's efforts at making these links with Jesus' tomb explicit and multiple, one might have expected the author to choose characters from among the women associated with the empty tomb stories. This precisely is not the case, however: Martha and Mary do not appear at the tomb of Jesus in any of the Gospels that have become canonical. Why should they appear here? To ask this question is to raise the question of sources and redaction of the narrative.

2.3 Sources for the narrative

An army of eminent source-critical scholars have pored over the text of John's Gospel, but the results of the collective source-critical labours remain more elusive than illuminating. Typically scholars posit a range of literary sources for the Gospel, though they are divided over the nature of these sources, in particular whether these sources include the Synoptics or not.[28] Complicating the issue of sources is the question of the development of the Johannine Gospel, which is generally considered to have been written in successive stages wherein a basic 'Grundschrift' was redacted several times to arrive at the current version (Fortna 1970; 1989; Brown 1966; Richter 1975; Lindars 1977; Boismard and Lamouille 1977). Not only has this suggestion of stages provided ample fodder for the reconstruction of putative earlier versions of the Gospel (e.g., Fortna 1970; 1989), but the influence of the diverse putative sources can thus be hypothesised at different redactional stages of the Gospel (e.g., Dauer 1984).[29] This broader discussion is reviewed by Beutler (1990) and Labahn and Lang (2004).

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[28] Bultmann (1941) posited three independent sources for John: a 'Semeia' source, a passion narrative and a 'sayings source' (Redequelle). The existence of the 'Semeia', or signs, source, continues to dominate scholarship, though opinions diverge over the extent of the source (Fortna 1970; Kysar 1975; Schnackenburg 1982–87) and dissenting voices that question the existence of the source have also been raised (Neirynck 1991; Thyen 1992a; Brodie 1993b; Van Belle 1994). While Beutler (1990) claims that Bultmann's hypothetical 'Redequelle' has now been largely abandoned as a source for the Johannine discourses, its heritage nevertheless appears to live on in source-critical considerations of John 11 and in particular in the predilection of source-critics to assume that discourse portions of the text are later interpolations into the narrative sections (compare Marchadour 1988: 37). While the independence of John from the Synoptic gospels had been a *sine qua non* of Johannine scholarship since the publication of Percival Gardner-Smith's *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (1938), more recently increasing numbers of scholars have argued for a dependence of John on the Synoptics (Lightfoot 1956; Boismard and Lamouille 1977; Neirynck 1977; Barrett 1978; see also the collection in Denaux 1992 and the review of Schnelle 1992). Reviewing the source-critical theories of seven Johannine scholars, Carson observes

Source-critical discussions have been particularly heated in relation to the raising of Lazarus, "arguably the finest, most complex, and from a historical-critical standpoint, the most infuriatingly inscrutable piece of work that ever came from John's pen" (North 2001: 40). Numerous scholars have sought to unearth one, or several, sources from within the text, while others have looked for synoptic parallels. A detailed examination of these attempts has been undertaken by Henneberry (1983). Can the sections of the text dealing with Martha be assigned to a particular source, be it a uniquely Johannine source, such as the 'Semeia' source, or a Synoptic source, such as Luke? If so, that might reveal important aspects of the earliest stages of the Martha traditions, and in particular about their interrelationship.

2.3.1 *John 11 as a narrative based on independent sources*

A number of scholars have argued that the sections of the text associated with Martha derive from a different source or later redaction. Stockton (1979), for example, suggests separate 'Martha' and 'Mary' traditions have been interwoven in the narrative and considers the Mary strand as more integral to the Gospel. While the Mary story

> is about her (unspecified) role in a miracle whose outcome was to show Jesus' glory and bring many to faith,...[providing] a transition in the

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as "remarkable...the extent to which they disagree both in their methods and their conclusions" (1978: 419).

[29] Dauer argues that the Johannine passion narrative is based on an independent source, which however itself is dependent on the Synoptics. Thyen (1992a, b) judges this hypothesis as both historically implausible, given the short time-frame between the creation of Luke and John in which this hypothetical source would have to have been created, and unnecessarily complicated. The same might be said for the argument of Klein (1976) on the sources for the Lukan and Johannine passion narratives.

> gospel narrative to the scene of Jesus' 'glorification',...the Martha story is about a woman whose faith supplied for her dead brother's resurrection (itself a foreshadowing of that of Jesus). (1979: 140)

In support of separating the strands of the tradition along these lines Stockton notes the names of the women, which he claims were interchangeable,[30] and the closely related narrative in the 'Secret Gospel of Mark' in which only one woman (unnamed) appears. This text has also been used by Boismard and Lamouille (1977: 277–294) to reconstruct a basic source-narrative behind John 11. While accepted by a number of scholars (such as Koester 1983; Crossan 1985), the authenticity of 'Secret Mark' is doubted by others (see Smith 1982; Criddle 1995; Jakab 1999). Moreover opinion is divided over whether 'Secret Mark' represents a pre-Markan version of the Gospel or a later edition. If it is a later edition, 'Secret Mark' might post-date the Gospel of John. Hence it could be that John 11 provides the source for the narrative in 'Secret Mark,' rather than the reverse (so Kremer 1985: 116–118; Marchadour 1988: 58–60). These complexities which attach to 'Secret Mark,' as well as the disappearance of the document itself, render difficult any attempt to use this text as an anchor for source-critical analyses of the Johannine text.

Significant for our purposes is that both Stockton and Boismard and Lamouille assign the Martha traditions to a later stratum of the text.[31] This opinion is shared by Rochais (1981) and Kremer (1985: 84), who both consider Martha a later addition to the text, designed to carry the evangelist's own theology. Wilkens (1959), Fortna (1970) and Schnackenburg (1982–87) all hold that the two sisters were already part of the narrative prior to its incorporation into the Gospel of John, but also concur that the text as it stands, and in particular the dialogue with Martha, is to be attributed to the evangelist.[32]

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[30] This appears to be a misreading of Strack and Billerbeck (1969: 2.184–185) who dispute such an interchangeability.

[31] Boismard and Lamouille argue for four levels of redaction of the Gospel (and the Lazarus narrative), all within the one Johannine school. It is at the third level at which a number of new traits and persons appear, including Martha and the Jews (Marchadour 1988: 50–54).

[32] A significantly different opinion is advanced by Burkett (1994), who argues for the existence of two separate sources that have been woven into the narrative. He does not allocate Martha to only one or other of these sources but claims that one sees her positively, the other negatively. Notably the 'negative' source includes not only 11:39–40, but also verses 23–27.

The difficulties with these source-critical analyses have been competently described by Marchadour (1988: 39–40, 57–58) and need not be rehearsed here. The variability in the results of source-critical analyses of the narrative of John 11 is itself eloquent testimony to the subjectivity of this enterprise. While it is entirely reasonable to suppose that the author used a source, or a number of sources, the possibility of unearthing these sources from the text appears elusive, particularly given the Gospel's highly uniform style (Ruckstuhl 1951: 208; 1987; Ruckstuhl and Dschulnigg 1991; so also the conclusion of Henneberry 1983). That said, it is notable that there is wide agreement among the source critics that Martha appears as the carrier of the evangelist's own theology (so also Schneiders 2003: 181). Irrespective of exactly when or how Martha assumed this place, this observation has significant implications. Why is *Martha* the carrier of the evangelist's theology? The role is by no means insignificant, nor can the choice of character for this task be simply an incidental matter. Schnackenburg asks, "are the roles simply allotted?" (1982–87: 2.320–321). Yet that Martha should have been simply 'allotted' the task of proclaiming the Christ is no more plausible than to assume that Peter was simply 'allotted' this role in the Synoptics. The fact that a woman can be assigned this task is significant and has important consequences for conceiving the community addressed by the text. As Schneiders aptly observes, Martha has

> a role analogous to Peter's as representative of apostolic faith in Matthew's Gospel. This representative role of Martha is difficult to understand unless women in John's community actually did function as community leaders. (2003: 107)

The fact that the woman is called Martha and not Mary Magdalene is also significant. "Tell me the name of your apostle and I will tell you who you are" said Bovon (1995: 169). As carrier of the evangelist's own theology Martha assumes a highly significant place within the Johannine Gospel.

2.3.2 *John 11 as a narrative based on Synoptic sources*

If the question, why Martha? appears difficult to answer by searching for uniquely Johannine sources, perhaps the search for synoptic parallels may yield better results. Indeed, there has been an increasing number of scholars who have challenged the independence of John from the Synoptics, to the extent that such independence (which was once a given in Johannine scholarship) can no longer be assumed (Denaux 1992).

Many scholars now suggest that the author expects the audience of John 11 to be familiar with synoptic texts (Neirynck 1977; Busse 1992; Kitzberger 1995; Thyen 1992a; and see the review of Beutler 1990).[33] Neirynck (1977) argues that John does not just know synoptic tradition, but that the Gospel presupposes the Synoptics in their current literary form. Thyen goes so far as to call John 11 a "palimpsest on synoptic texts" (1992a: 2021). In particular the connections between John 11 and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19–31) raise the possibility that one text is re-reading the other (see Schnackenburg 1982–87:2.401, 428–432).[34] Typically this is seen in terms of John re-reading Luke, though Shellard (1995) cogently argues the reverse, that Luke is using John.[35]

Again the precise details of the various source-critical proposals need not detain us here. The question is whether it is likely that John has derived Martha from Luke, or vice versa. In one instance the characterisation is likely connected: both Luke 10:38–42 and John 12:2 characterise Martha as one who serves. However, this connection of Martha to διακονία appears only in John 12:2 (ἡ Μάρθα διηκόνει). What, then, of the rest of the narrative? Scholars have noted similarities such as Mary 'sitting' (Lk 10:39; Jn 11:20) 'at the feet of Jesus' (Lk 10:39; Jn 11:2, 12:3) and the appearance of the 'house' (Lk 10:38; Jn 11:20; 12:3). But the differences between the accounts are far greater than the similarities: the sisters do not appear to have a brother in Luke 10:38–42 and their house appears to be located in Galilee, rather than in Bethany. More importantly, it was noted earlier that the Johannine narrative is explicitly and intentionally linked to the passion of Christ. Yet if Martha and Mary are derived from Luke, their choice makes little sense. Why pluck Martha 'out of the kitchen,' as it were, rather than choose one of a number of other women who appear in connection with the passion? Why not Joanna or Salome (Lk 24:10; Mk 16:1)?

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[33] The frequent points of contact between Luke and John have been long observed (Schniewind 1914; Bailey 1963; Cribbs 1971; Dauer 1972; Teeple 1974; Maddox 1982: 158–179; Soards 1987: 32–38, 70–83). Schniewind attributes this to oral tradition, while Bailey does not exclude literary tradition. Shellard (1995) argues that Luke used John, rather than vice versa, while others have argued that both Luke and John drew on a common tradition (Bailey 1963; Klein 1976; Robinson 1979). Klein (1976) suggests a common 'Grundschicht' for Luke and John which is based not on Mark but on Mark's 'Vorlage.' His posited redactional history is far too complicated to be historically plausible, however, for it requires both the development of a 'Grundschicht' and a Lukan 'Vorlage' based on this Grundschicht between the writing of Mark and the writing of Luke. Historically this is implausible in the timeframe generally posited between the writing of Mark, Luke and John.

[34] While most studies focus on Lukan parallels, Brodie (1993b: 86–88) suggests Mark 9:9–29 as the source for the raising of Lazarus. He fails to convince, however.

[35] This possibility cannot be discounted. In particular, it cannot be discounted that at some stage of redaction the direction of influence is from John to Luke rather than vice versa. For one of the oft-noted peculiarities is the name Lazarus in both instances: in John because it is the only time a recipient of Jesus' healing miracles is named and in Luke because it is the only time a character in a parable is named. Thus it is not immediately obvious whence the name, or in which context it appeared first (North 2001: 119–121).

Busse (1992: 304) proposes an alternative explanation for the choice of Martha. The Johannine narrative aims to define who are 'Jesus' own.' The apostles don't fit this role, he suggests, because they are loaded from the Synoptics with the theme of unbelief. Conversely, neither Lazarus nor Martha and Mary belong to the apostles. Rather, they all belong to a special Lukan tradition. Even there they already stand close to Jesus: Mary is even characterised as disciple by virtue of sitting at the feet of the Lord listening to him (Lk 10:39). As such they meet the profile of the sheep of the Good Shepherd who know his voice. Busse's argument is not convincing, however. For Lazarus, Martha and Mary do not all stand close to Jesus. It seems odd to claim such a relationship for a character in a parable; indeed Lazarus is said, if anything, to be close to Abraham rather than close to Jesus. While Martha and Mary stand close to Jesus, the same can be said for the group of women disciples who travel with Jesus (Lk 8:1–3). Indeed, the latter group stands closer to Jesus, having been characterised as a parallel group to the male disciples (Ricci 1994). Again, the real question is why John would choose Martha and Mary as opposed to these women of Luke 8:1–3, particularly given that the latter group already has some association with the passion narrative, unlike the Lukan Martha and Mary.

Scholars who examine John 11 as a re-reading of synoptic texts (and in particular Luke) have not been able to offer a convincing argument for supposing Martha to derive from Luke. In the naming and characterisation of Martha the Johannine and Lukan traditions appear as two independent traditions. In the one case the aspect that is most significant about Martha is her διακονία; in the other this feature is barely present at all. Rather, it is the faith of Martha that appears in the foreground. She appears as a key character in a narrative concerned centrally with death, resurrection and glory—the death and resurrection of Lazarus which reveals the glory of Jesus and foreshadows the death and resurrection of Jesus.

2.4 The raising of Lazarus within the Gospel of John: Some conclusions

I began by asking the question whether Martha appears as the model Johannine believer. The analysis of the text suggested that she is. Martha articulates Johannine tradition in her responses to Jesus and pronounces the most comprehensive confession of faith in comparison with the faith the text aims to evoke in its readers (20:31). The analysis also brought to light two other facets significant for the interpretation of Martha. First, source-critical scholars have identified Martha as the carrier of the evangelist's theology. Not only is this consistent with the reading I have suggested, but it has important implications for the status of Martha in the Gospel of John and among the text's intended audience. That a woman, and specifically Martha, should be chosen for this role is momentous and suggests she is a person of considerable authority for the author and the audience envisaged by the text.

Second, the question why *Martha* should appear in this role has found no satisfying answer from a literary perspective. One can reach for a historical solution of course—Martha appears because the narrative recounts an actual historical event involving a historical woman of that name. Alternatively, the historical solution might take the form argued by D'Angelo (1990b), that Martha and Mary were significant figures in the Johannine community, a missionary couple, whose memory lives on in the story. If Martha was remembered as a significant (historical) member of the community—much as the 'Beloved Disciple' appears to have been—her role as bearer of Johannine tradition would make ready sense. She proclaims the Christ in the story just as she proclaimed the Christ to the community. Proving or disproving either of these historical hypotheses is difficult, given the limits of the extant historical data. In the next chapter I will suggest another, literary, possibility that could shed further light on the choice of Martha. Suffice it for now to highlight the question and to turn to the second question that was raised at the outset, the question whether Martha was interpreted as the model of faith in early Christian tradition.

2.5 The story in the hands of its interpreters

The story of the raising of Lazarus assumed a significant place in the early Church, particularly in its liturgical life, with the development of

Lazarus Saturday, which was celebrated in the week before Easter and was part of the Holy Week cycle at least from the end of the fourth century (Grosdidier de Matons 1964–81: 3.145). It is not possible here to conduct a complete survey of the numerous homilies and commentaries dealing with this pericope (on these see Kremer 1985; Marchadour 1988: 197–222). Nor, indeed, is it necessary. Rather, I have selected a few texts on the basis of their significance for opening a few windows into early Christian exegesis of Martha. Since the raising of Lazarus was a favourite theme in early Christian iconography, there is also an opportunity to consider how Martha was 'pictured.'

2.5.1 *Origen*

Origen's *Commentary on John* represents the oldest extant commentary on a New Testament text and deserves attention for that alone (Heine 1993: 3).[36] It also reveals one common interpretation of Martha at the tomb. Unfortunately there is a large gap in the extant work, covering John 8:53—11:38 (books 21–27). While Origen's comments on Martha's second speech (11:39) are preserved, his reflections on her first dialogue with Jesus (11:21–27) have been lost. This may skew the perception of his interpretation of Martha.

Origen's comments on 11:39–42 focus on the delay between Jesus' command to remove the stone in v.39 and its actual removal in v.41 (*In Joh.* 28.14–22). This "delay" (βραδυτής) which results from Martha's comment that the body already stinks is interpreted as a sign of Martha's unbelief. She is described as hindering those who were commanded to take away the stone with her interjection. Nothing should come between a command of Jesus and its fulfillment; indeed one who immediately does what is asked "has become an imitator of Christ" (μιμητὴς γέγονεν Χριστοῦ, 28.18; Heine 1993: 295; compare Blanc 1966: 5.66). By implication Martha is not such an imitator of Christ; and indeed Origen pronounces his judgment on her:

> We must believe, therefore, that it is a condemnation (κατηγορίαν) of Martha that the words, 'Therefore they took away the stone,' were written later. They should have been said next to the words, 'Jesus says, Take away the stone.' (28.22; Heine 1993: 296)

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[36] According to Heine, the *Commentary on John*, at least the section which is of interest here, was composed after Origen settled in Caesarea (c. 232–234 CE), most likely nearer to 241 or 242, and as such "was a work of Origen's maturity as a theologian" (1993: 19).

2.5.2 *Cyril of Jerusalem*

Cyril, the fourth-century Bishop of Jerusalem, provides a stark contrast to Origen's reading, seeing Martha as the model of faith. His *Catecheses*, or Lenten lectures, were delivered to catechumens as part of their preparation for baptism.[37] In the fifth lecture, Cyril asks,

> Do you wish to see with more certainty that some are saved by the faith of others? Lazarus died; one day had passed, and a second, and a third, and dissolution and putrefaction were already setting into his body. How could one four days dead believe and call upon the Redeemer on his own behalf? But what was lacking in the dead man was supplied by his sisters. For when the Lord came, one of them fell at His feet. To His question: "Where have you laid him?" she answered: "Lord, by this time he is already decayed, for he is dead four days." Then the Lord said: "If you believe, you shall behold the glory of God." This was tantamount to saying: Wake up what is wanting in your dead brother's faith. And the sisters' faith, in fact, availed to recall the dead man from the gates of hell. (Catechesis 5.9; McCauley and Stephenson 1969: 144)

The last sentence might better be translated as: "So great was the strength of the faith of the sisters, that they recalled the dead man from the doors of Hades" (Καὶ τοσοῦτον ἴσχυσε τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡ πίστις, ὥστε τὸν νεκρὸν ἐξ ᾅδου πυλῶν ἀνεκαλέσατο; Reischl and Rupp 1967: 1.144). Cyril does not distinguish the two sisters. The response of Martha, "Lord by this time he is already decayed," appears as if made by Mary (the one who fell at his feet). It is the faith of the two sisters together which serves Cyril to make his point. Indeed, Cyril shows little explicit interest in the identity of the sisters and never names either of them.[38] What is interesting, however, is that he does not disapprove of Martha's objection to lifting the stone. To the contrary, the faith which raises Lazarus appears in response to Jesus' words, "If you believe, you shall behold the glory of God" (11:40). Thus it is not Martha's faith confessed in 11:27 which Cyril invokes, but the faith evoked at the tomb itself.

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[37] Telfer (1955: 36–38) dates the lectures to 349 CE, but Stephenson argues that they were probably not delivered (or recorded) only in one year (McCauley and Stephenson 1969: 1–2).

[38] While the name Martha does not appear in Cyril, there is an interesting parallel in a comment of Cyril's contemporary Athanasius. In the *Orations against Arius* Athanasius explicitly connects Jesus' announcement 'I am the life' with Martha: καθ' ἃ πρὸς τὴν Μάρθαν αὐτὸς «ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ζωη» λέγων (*Or.* 4,32). Given that the focus of the text is on Christology—on the revelation of Jesus rather than on the text of the Gospel of John—it is noteworthy that Martha is named. The fact that the name has not dropped out suggests that she is not an insignificant 'other.'

Jesus' response to Martha is here not a judgment of her lack of faith, but an invitation to faith, to a faith which Martha and her sister are explicitly claimed to have had.

The catecheses served the purpose of explaining the Jerusalem creed to the catechumens and were, at least initially, available only to the baptised and the candidates for baptism (McCauley and Stephenson 1969: 2). The fifth catechesis, from which this excerpt is drawn, deals with the creed and the faith by which it is believed. Here the raising of Lazarus appears in the context of the initiation of believers. The contrast between Origen and Cyril is striking and reveals that among early Christian exegetes the interpretation of Martha was by no means uniform. Two sermons will further serve to illustrate the point. These have been selected because they deal extensively with Martha.

2.5.3 *Amphilochius*

The development of Lazarus Saturday in the liturgical calendar of the Byzantine church spawned numerous homilies preached on the 'four day dead.' The homily on Lazarus, Mary and Martha by Amphilochius of Iconium represents "one of the earliest [extant] Greek homilies on this subject" (Barkhuizen 1994: 1). Amphilochius was bishop of Iconium in Cappadocia and closely connected to Basil and to Gregory of Nazianzus, who was probably a cousin (Datema 1978: ix). The homily in question was probably part of a series on the Fourth Gospel (critical edition in Datema 1978: 74–92). Martha's lack of faith and understanding forms an important *topos* in the homily (Barkhuizen 1994: 5). She is described as running to Jesus with a heretical appeal: "When Martha the sister of Lazarus heard, she ran, she hurried, bringing an old heretical appeal (αἱρετικὴν πρεσβείαν προσφέρουσα)" (2.49–50). Her haste is contrasted with the patience of Jesus (Ὁ δὲ κύριος αὐτὸς πέλαγος ὢν μακροθυμίας) who replies to her plea ("if you had been here, my brother would not have died") at length:

> What are you saying Martha? You call me Lord, and the Lord you do not consider? Am I not here? A little patience; for soon you will be taught by your brother. For your brother will rise. Recognise yourself, Martha, for you are drunk with pain (as he said to her, calling drunk anyone mistaken). When you become sober, you will come to your senses. (2.54–59)[39]

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[39] I have followed Barkhuizen (1994) in translating σωφρονισθήση as coming to one's senses; the Greek also evokes the womanly virtue of 'chastity' (σωφροσύνη).

Martha “objects” (ἀνθυπένεγκε), “I know he will rise on the last day, because she is “entrenched in human ways of thinking” (συμπεριενεχθεῖσα ἀνθρωπίνοις ῥήμασιν, 2.60), a description which matches the way the Jews are described elsewhere in the sermon (4.98, 102–103). She is also described as “stammering” (2.62). Rather than a pillar of faith, Martha has become the Arian heretic, an interpretation found also in Leontius, a sixth-century preacher in Constantinople (Allen and Datema 1991: 35).

Just as the dialogue of John 11:20–27 is expanded in ways that characterise Martha as lacking faith and understanding, so her second dialogue with Jesus (11:39–40) is also expanded. The Martha of Amphilochius asks,

> Where are you going master (δέσποτα)? Why do you want to see the tomb of Lazarus? Why do you stir up our pain? Why do you want to raise grief? Why do you want to see the tomb? It will profit nobody, master: already he stinks, for he has been dead four days. (3.85–88)

Jesus responds,

> Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God? You say to me, ‘already he stinks.’ Your sister anoints, and you make smoke with unbelief? (Ἡ ἀδελφή σου μυρίζει, καὶ σὺ καπνίζῃ τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ;) I wish to see the grave of my loved one. (3.88–91)

Calling Lazarus to come out of the tomb, Jesus adds, “Convince Martha your sister that so I command and do not beseech” (πληροφόρησον Μάρθαν τὴν ἀδελφήν σου ὡς κελεύω καὶ οὐχ ἱκετεύω, 4.121–122).

Amphilochius is by no means unique among patristic writers in his characterisation of Martha. Both the ‘running Martha’ and the description that she is ‘drunk with pain’ appears in Cyril of Alexandria’s *Commentary on John*:

> But Martha, as a simpler person, ran, drunk indeed with her grief, but nevertheless acting with more vigour (ἡ δὲ Μάρθα ὡς ἁπλουστέρα ἔδραμε, μεθύουσα μὲν τῷ πάθει, φέρουσα δὲ ὅμως νεανικώτερον). (11.20; Pusey 1965: 2.272)

The idea that Martha is the ‘weaker’ of the women because of her comment that Lazarus stinks, already observed in Origen, recurs in Chrysostom (*Homilies on John* 62.1–3; 63.3; cf. 65.1), as does the idea that Martha’s confession is incomplete. Indeed Chrysostom’s reading of Martha’s confession shows an affinity with that of Moloney:

> It seems to me the woman did not grasp the meaning of what was said. However, she did understand that it was something great, though she did not altogether understand it. That was why, when asked one thing, she replied another. Meanwhile, she gained enough profit so that she brought her grief to an end. Such, indeed, is the power of Christ's words. (*Hom* 62.3; Goggin 1957: 174)[40]

2.5.4 *Pseudo-Eustathius*

The homiletic tradition of the early Church did not always read Martha as the faithless one. This was already observed in the catechetical lectures of Cyril. Even more striking is a homily attributed to Eustathius of Antioch (critical edition with description of the MS in Declerck 2002). Cavallera (1905), who first published the text, judged it authentic. The arguments which he adduced in favour of Eustathian authorship have failed to convince his critics however, since the Trinitarian formulas in the homily do not reappear elsewhere in the writings of Eustathius and the language likewise differs significantly. Declerck holds that, at least in its current form, the homily postdates the Council of Chalcedon and hence derives at the earliest from the second half of the fifth century. He further judges that the homily was most likely composed in Antioch (2002: CCCCLI), which may account for its attribution to Eustathius. The homily is an exposition of John 12:1–8 whose main theme is the revelation of the true divinity of Christ, revealed threefold: in the presence of the raised Lazarus (chaps. 2–10), the confession of Martha (chap. 11–16), and the anointing of Mary (chaps. 17–26), which is an anointing of the temple of God (Zoepfl 1916: 12).

The homily deals extensively with Martha. She is characterised as

> …hospitable (φιλόξενος) like Abraham, loving the poor (φιλόπτωχος) like Job and Christ-loving in (her) confession (φιλόχριστος τὴν ὁμολογίαν) like Peter, holding open the door of beloved hospitality to all who come. Therefore, neither forgetful nor in ignorance, as Lot of old entertained angels, but with good insight and disposition (ἐν εἰδήσει ἀγαθῇ καὶ διαθέσει) she welcomed the creator and Lord of the angels under (her) roof. This same Martha was such as to be great even among the great ones (Καὶ ἡ μὲν Μάρθα τοιαύτη καὶ τηλικαύτη καὶ ἐν τηλικούτοις). (11.130–137)

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[40] Elsewhere Chrysostom compares Martha to the synagogue who is of little faith and loving earthly things: Μάρθα δὲ τὴν συναγωγὴν ὑποδεικνύει· ὀλιγόπιστος γὰρ, καὶ τῶν ἐπιγείων φίλη· (*On Martha, Mary and Lazarus*, PG 61.701).

Mary receives praise for filling the whole house with the perfume of her nard, Martha for filling the house with her confession. For this the preacher calls her a 'second Peter':

> The holy women breathed out the nard of piety (μύρον εὐσεβείας), a nard of prosperity (μύρου εὐωδίας), and they filled the whole house with it, Martha through her confession (διὰ τῆς ὁμολογίας), and Mary through her works (διὰ τῆς ἐργασίας). Martha is a second Peter; for grace breathed also on this woman and therefore poured out the faith of the chief to her (Δεύτερος Πέτρος ἡ Μάρθα· ἐπέπνευσε γὰρ καὶ ταύτῃ ἡ χάρις, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αὐτῇ τὴν τοῦ κορυφαίου ἀνώμβρισε πίστιν). (12.141–145)

The source for Martha's identification as a 'second Peter' is her confession. This status is justified by the observation that χάρις breathed also on Martha. The implications of this for the authority of Martha must not be overlooked. Χάρις is a gift but also a power (Conzelmann 1973: 366; cf. Acts 6:8; Rom 1:5; 2 Tim 2:1). Moreover, Martha appears here in immediate continuity and proximity to Peter. It is the faith of the head (κορυφαίος, a title frequently used of Peter; Lampe 1961–68: 796) that is poured out on her by grace. This is, to my knowledge, the only time that a woman is called a second Peter in the extant early Christian literature. Given the status of Peter in the early Church, its significance cannot be overestimated.

Eustathius lists three persons who thus confessed the Christ:

> Πρῶτον Πέτρος θεοδιδάκτως ὁμολογεῖ, δεύτερον Μάρθα θεομυήτως ἀναφωνεῖ, τρίτον Ἰωάννης ἐν δέλτοις θεοφρόνως καὶ μονογενῶς θεολογεῖ, Πέτρος καὶ Μάρθα· Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος, Ἰωάννης· Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ Ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν. (13.151–153)
>
> First Peter confesses in a manner that is God-taught. Second Martha proclaims in a God-initiated manner. Third John theologises on writing tablets in a godly-minded and unique way. Peter and Martha [announce]: 'You are the Christ, the son of the living God', John: 'In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God' and 'the word became flesh and dwelt among us.'

The text is difficult to translate because it uses theologically complex vocabulary in an adverbial construction that is not easily rendered into English. What is announced here is a line of authoritative teaching, the faith of the church "first confessed by Peter" (Πρῶτον Πέτρος ὁμολογεῖ), "second proclaimed by Martha" (δεύτερον Μάρθα ἀναφωνεῖ) and "third theologised on writing tablets by John" (τρίτον Ἰωάννης ἐν δέλτοις θεολογεῖ). Peter's confessing is done in a way that is "God-taught" (θεοδιδάκτως), Martha's proclaiming is "God-initiated" (θεομυήτως), while John's theologising is "God-thinking" (θεοφρόνως) and μονογενῶς. The latter term has often been translated as 'only-begotten' when it refers to Jesus (for example in John 1:4), though Brown (1966: 1.13–14) observes that this translation is based on Jerome's Latin version which rendered this term as 'unigenitus' in response to the Arian crisis. The term literally means 'unique' and can also be equivalent to 'beloved' (Lampe 1961–68: 881).

Martha has become the link between Peter and John. One could not accord a woman higher authority within the church than to set her thus in this triad. Moreover, the preacher makes it clear that the confession of Peter and Martha are identical. She proclaims the Petrine faith. It is the confessions of these three figures which form the basis for Eustathius' subsequent reflections on Christ (14.157–16.194). Martha's confession wins her a 'crown of glory': Ἀρκεῖ σοι, Μάρθα, ἡ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁμολογία εἲς στέφανον δόξης (23.257).

The homily is significant not only for its univocally positive evaluation of Martha, but more importantly because it considers Martha's proclamation a foundation of faith. It attests precisely the positive reading of Martha as pillar of Johannine faith that I proposed earlier. Clearly it is not only modern readers who are 're-reading' the text to 'retrieve' Martha as a leader and model of faith. Rather, this perception of Martha existed already in the early Church. Indeed, the characterisation of Martha here offers a striking contrast to that of Mary Magdalene who is at times depicted in conflict with Peter (on this conflict see Brock 1998; 1999; 2003). Whereas a 'struggle for authority' is played out in some early Christian texts using the figures of Mary Magdalene and Peter (so Brock), Martha is here not only given an extraordinary position of authority, but is set in continuity rather than in conflict with Peter. Her confession makes her not a rival authority, but a 'second Peter,' τηλικαύτη καὶ ἐν τηλικούτοις, "great even among the great ones."

2.5.5 *Romanus Melodus*

Two hymns on the raising of Lazarus have been transmitted under the name of Romanus Melodus, who was a deacon in Constantinople in the first half of the fifth century. Grosdidier de Matons, who published the Greek text with French translation, judges one of them authentic and the other pseudonymous (1964–81: 3.145), though this matters little for the purposes of the characterisation of Martha. The first, authentic, hymn (hymn 26) ends without recounting the resurrection, but includes an extended dialogue between Hades and Death who are cheated of their prey. Grosdidier de Matons suggests that this is not a matter of the hymn having been truncated, rather it corresponds with the way the commemoration was subdivided into two parts in the liturgy and celebrated in two different places in the fourth century: in the place where Jesus met Mary and Martha, where a church stood by the side of the road, and at the tomb of Lazarus itself (Egeria, Travels 29.3–6). While Egeria speaks only of one reading in the first church (Travels 29.4), it seems likely that there were two, with the reading of the raising of Lazarus itself being read at the site of the tomb, rather than in the church where Jesus met the sisters. The two readings would have served as the basis for homilies and it is also possible that the hymns sung on that occasion respected this division (so Grosdidier de Matons 1964–81: 3.149). The *kontakion* did not yet exist in the fourth century; nor is it known whether Greek hymns of a narrative character existed at the time of Egeria, though they did exist in Syriac. Grosdidier de Matons therefore suggests that the sources for the *kontakion* of Romanus are to be sought here and in some of the homilies that were preached on the occasion.

The faith of the women is a key theme of the hymn and is stressed in relation to both Mary and Martha: “Faith is a great treasure, the person who has it attains all things. Mary and likewise Martha had it and took pride in it (ἐκαυχῶντο)” (26.2.4–5). The message which the women send to Jesus to alert him of Lazarus’ illness is described as a letter “dictated by faith, written by infallible hope and sealed by love” (26.3.6–7). Jesus’ delay is explained as a test to reveal the disposition (γνώμη) of those who love him: to reveal that Martha, Lazarus and Mary love him not merely one day but constantly (26.4.2–7).

The hymn explains that Jesus “saved some and crowned others” (τὴν μὲν ἔσωσε, τὴν δὲ ἔστεψε, 26.4.10)—he saved Mary from seven demons (26.5.4–7),[41] and he “crowned Martha when she served them” (Μάρθαν τότε ἐστεφάνωσεν ὅτε πόθῳ διηκόνει αὐτοῖς, 26.5.8–9).[42] Martha’s service is described as πόθῳ, an adverb that expresses a strong desire, a striving after, or even an anxiety. In the latter case, this ‘anxious serving’ could recall Luke 10:38–42, though Martha's anxiety is there described using different words (μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ). More likely John 12:2 is in view, both because of its association with Mary's anointing and because Martha serves 'them,' thus the whole party, not just Jesus. Moreover, πόθῳ more likely connotes a positive quality of the service, for thus Romanus uses the word elsewhere (30.9.7; 35.15.1; 40.9.1; 52.15.2). The hymn depicts Martha unequivocally in a positive light, stressing her faithfulness and her love for Jesus. Her confession does not play an explicit role in this: she is praised for the faith and love expressed in sending for Jesus when Lazarus falls ill, and for her service.

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[41] Here the hymn conflates Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalene; compare Jn 12:3; Mk 16:9; Lk 8:2.

[42] Compare hymn 31 which sings of the “incorruptible crown” (τὸν ἄφθαρτον στέφανον).

A key theme of the second hymn are the tears of Mary and Martha. They are mentioned already in the proem to the first hymn (Μαρίας δὲ καὶ Μάρθας οἰκτείρας τὰ δάκρυα, "you had compassion on the tears of Mary and Martha," 26.pro.4), but become a constant refrain in the second. At the end of each verse Christ is implored to have mercy on the tears of Mary and Martha.[43] The mourning (ὀδυρμόν), lament (θρῆνον) and tears of the women are stressed repeatedly (27.1.1; 27.4.7; 27.8.1). At the same time they are said to be sustained by faith (Ὑπὸ τῆς πίστεως αἱ γυναῖκες συνεχόμεναι ἅμα, 27.3.1–2). Here too the faith of both women is equally stressed: they are "together" (ἅμα) sustained in their faith. No significant distinction is drawn between the sisters. They are both grieving, faithful women who become the model for the congregation: "Let us imitate the sisters of the faithful Lazarus, crying out to Christ with weeping, faith and love: 'Save us....'" (27.17.3–6).

2.5.6 *The story pictured*

Iconography offers another window onto the interpretation of the Johannine Martha in early Christian traditions. The raising of Lazarus was depicted frequently, particularly in funerary contexts. It has received extensive treatment in the literature (Leclercq 1929; Mâle 1951; Benoit 1954; Darmstaedter 1955; Wessel 1971; Dassmann 1973; Nauerth 1980; Marchadour 1988), most recently by Partyka (1993), Albertson (1995), Jensen (1995; 2000), Salvadori (2002) and Esler and Piper (2006). Much of the interest has centered on the development and meaning of the iconography, in particular on the development of several different types, such as the 'magician type' in which Christ is holding a wand, the attribute of the magician (see Mathews 1999: 54–91), and the 'mummy type' in which Lazarus is depicted as a small, upright mummy.[44] The images are ancient: the earliest representations appear in Roman catacombs, the earliest among these in the Catacomb of Callixtus (Esler and Piper 2006: 134), dated by Salvadori to 190–220 CE (2002: 514–515).

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[43] In the last verse are these replaced by the tears of Adam and Eve. It needs to be noted, however, that the hymn falls into two distinct parts and that Grosdidier de Matons suggests that in fact two separate hymns have here been combined (1964–81: 3.181–184).

The depiction of a sister of Lazarus is rare. Partyka's survey of 85 funerary monuments in Rome portraying the raising of Lazarus counts only three appearances of Martha (1993: 58). The first of these is in the Cubiculum Coronationis crypt of the Catacomb of Praetextatus, dated by Partyka to around 220–230 CE (1993: 123 n. 3). She is standing; the upper part of the body is destroyed, as are the upper parts of the body of Jesus and Lazarus. While the figure is not explicitly identified as Martha, Partyka (1993: 58, 124) interprets her thus. She appears also in the Greek chapel of the Priscilla catacomb (second half of third century) where she stands veiled next to Jesus, facing the front with raised arms. Behind her appears another woman, also veiled and turning to Christ, identified by Partyka (1993: 172) as Mary. The third appearance of Martha listed by Partyka (1993: 118) is loculus 47 of the Callistus catacomb (second half of the fourth century). Only the upper part of the figure remains and even this is not complete: she is veiled, facing front, dressed in tunic and pallium. The rest of the figure is lost.

Partyka remains somewhat tentative in his identification of all three of these figures as Martha. Presumably the identification is based on the text of John 11 and specifically on the posture—in all three cases the woman is standing. As will be seen presently, the more common iconographic type, which appears in the fourth century, depicts a woman crouched at the feet of Jesus. Since Mary is described as falling at the feet of Jesus (Jn 11:32) it might appear reasonable to conclude that a standing woman is Martha while a kneeling figure is Mary. There is another possibility for the interpretation of these three earliest figures, however, which Partyka does not consider at all: the woman could be an Orans.

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[44] The first, and still most comprehensive, account of the development of the iconography of the raising of Lazarus was published by Darmstaedter (1955). Nauerth (1980) offers an important critique, observing that the identification of these images as 'raising of Lazarus,' or 'raising of the youth of Nain' have often been made on the basis of texts rather than iconography.

The Orans, predominantly a woman with open eyes and raised hands, appears frequently in early Christian art, including in biblical scenes, where the figure may replace the main protagonist, often in scenes of deliverance (Snyder 2003; Abrahamsen 2002). It is the most frequent female image on the extant catacomb frescoes and sarcophagi (Salvadori 2002). The interpretation of this figure is uncertain. She has been construed as the soul of the dead person, a portrait of the deceased, a personification of *pietas* and a descendant of prehistoric goddess depictions (Snyder 2003; Abrahamsen 2002; Jensen 2000: 35–37).[45]

Several features speak in favour of considering the woman in these three early catacomb paintings an Orans. In the one image in which her posture is sufficiently preserved (the Greek chapel of the Priscilla catacomb), her posture is that of the Orans (Partyka 1993: 280 fig. 78, 79). Given the highly symbolic nature of the early images (Darmstaedter 1955: 6; Dassmann 1973: 47–48; Jensen 2000: 24) and the fact that the Orans may appear in biblical scenes, it would seem equally plausible to posit an Orans as a depiction of a character from the narrative. As a figure appearing in scenes of deliverance, the Orans fits well into the symbolism of early Lazarus depictions in which the Saviour delivers souls from Hades (so Darmstaedter 1955). Finally, the size of the figure is striking: in all cases the woman is the same size as Jesus. In this she contrast sharply with the depictions of the woman at the feet of Jesus, who predominantly appears as a disproportionately small figure. Conversely, the Orans is depicted full-size in comparison with surrounding figures. While much speaks in favour of supposing the woman in these images an Orans one feature speaks against such an interpretation. In the Priscilla catacomb a second woman appears behind her, which might suggest a depiction of the two sisters rather than an Orans.

From the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century a woman appears crouched at the feet of Jesus in a third type of Lazarus iconography, which Darmstaedter (1955: 12) dubs the ‘Philosopher Type’ because Jesus is shown holding a philosopher’s scroll and dressed in philosopher’s garb. Like Lazarus, the woman is disproportionately small in comparison with Jesus. The inclusion of a woman crouched at the feet of Jesus becomes more common in the fourth-century sarcophagi which depict numerous biblical scenes. As in the case of the frescoes discussed above, the woman is not identified. Partyka (1993: 58–59) interprets her as Mary on the basis of her posture. It is true that the New Testament accounts consistently depict Mary at the feet of Jesus: falling at his feet in the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:32), anointing his feet (Jn 12:3) and sitting by the feet of Jesus (Lk 10:39). Insofar as any comment is made on Martha's posture, she is depicted standing (Lk 10:40), and, in the absence of other specification, such a posture may also be implied in the encounter with Jesus in John 11:20–28. Further in favour of such an interpretation is the depiction on one sarcophagus (Museo Pio Cristiano inv. 161) which shows the woman at the feet of Jesus holding a small jar in her hands (Albertson 1995: 125), thus combining the narrative of the anointing of Jesus by Mary and the raising of Lazarus.

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[45] Jensen (2000: 36) notes that the figure often appears with the Good Shepherd, in which case it may represent the Saviour and the saved. The prayer of the Orans might in this case be thanksgiving, rather than prayer for deliverance.

It cannot be assumed, however, that this distinction in posture was observed by early Christian artists and interpreters. In a modern parallel, Darmstaedter explicitly claims that Martha "throws herself at the feet of Jesus" (1955: 5), failing to notice that in John 11 it is not Martha, but Mary who appears thus. Given that both Martha and Mary are later depicted at the feet of Jesus in manuscript illuminations, a distinction made on the basis of posture may reflect modern readings of the text rather than ancient interpretations. Furthermore, if the posture is intended primarily to suggest supplication, then it befits both Martha and Mary (see also Salvadori 2002: 87–88). Finally, a sarcophagus from Saragossa bears the inscription "MARTA" beneath the woman kneeling before Christ (Heisenberg 1922: 20). Thus it cannot be assumed on the basis of the text of John 11 that a woman kneeling at the feet of Jesus is Mary. Indeed, none of the three standard features of the iconography of the raising of Lazarus—a wand held by Jesus, Lazarus depicted as a mummy and the tomb as an aedicule—derive from the narrative of John 11 (Albertson 1995: 123). Therefore it is by no means necessary that the depiction of the women should derive from the text of John 11. Stuhlfauth (1924) and more recently Frerich (1996) both note that the iconography of a woman kneeling before or behind Jesus is ambiguous. It is conceivable that the woman embodies both women from the narrative (so Darmstaedter 1955: 13), or that she was interpreted as (or conflated with) yet another figure, for example the haemorrhaging woman. Conversely, Heisenberg (1922) argued on the basis of the identification of the kneeling woman on the sarcophagus that in many other images that depict only Christ and a kneeling woman the image is not the haemorrhaging woman, but Martha.

Darmstaedter (1955: 14) notes a further important development in the iconography of the raising of Lazarus in the middle of the fourth century: in a number of sarcophagi one of the sisters is led to Jesus by Peter. She bends over his hand to kiss it. Jesus is turned towards her while pointing with his other hand to Lazarus. Significantly, the figure of the woman is no longer tiny but has assumed the same proportions as Jesus. Darmstaedter denotes this a change from a symbolic scene to "an idyll" (1955: 14; see also Gerke 1940: 31). Later art, especially manuscript illuminations attest a further change in the iconography which arose in sixth-century Byzantium, a change from a symbolic to a narrative depiction (Darmstaedter 1955: 18–20). In such narrative depictions one would expect the women to be depicted with correct proportionality; and perhaps the size of the women in these earlier sarcophagi already attests such a development. On the other hand, precisely the focus on the woman as central figure, created by the direction of Jesus who is turned towards her not towards Lazarus, suggests that the change is not simply a move towards a more realistic narrative depiction. The woman has become the main figure in the scene. Her plea for the raising of her brother and the granting of this plea are the subject of the image. This focus on the plea of Martha is reflected in the epitaph which Pope Damasus I (366–384) wrote for himself.

> He who walking on the sea could calm the bitter waves, who gives life to the dying seeds of the earth; he who was able to loose the mortal chains of death, and after three days' darkness could bring again to the upper world the brother for his sister Martha: he, I believe, will make Damasus rise again from the dust. (Foley and McCloskey 2003: 342; see also Leclercq 1920: 171)

In the iconography, as in the hymns, Martha appears as the faithful supplicant. As such she forms a point of identification for the viewer: as she entreated Christ to raise her brother from the dead, so the person who commissioned the image entreats Christ to raise her/his beloved. In some cases it is this plea, rather than the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, which assumes centre-stage.

One final image deserves mention. A Coptic textile fragment depicts Christ and Moses in upper register and below the cure of the woman with the issue of blood and raising of Lazarus (Mathews 1999: 60 fig. 40). The textile, currently housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Museum no. 722–1897), is a resist-dyed linen from Akhmim, dated to the fifth or sixth century (Kendrick 1922: 65–66), probably a wall hanging and perhaps part of a hanging or set of hangings from which several other fragments are extant (Woolley 2001; Weitzmann 1979: 433–435). While Woolley identifies this particular fragment as a wall hanging, it appears that such weavings were also worn as clothing. Asterius, bishop of Pontus, comments in around 400 CE,

> the more religious among rich men and women, having picked out the story of the Gospels, have handed it over to the weavers—I mean Christ together with all His disciples, and each one of the miracles the way it is related. You may see the wedding of Galilee with the water jars, the paralytic carrying his bed on his shoulders, the blind man healed by means of clay, the woman with an issue of blood seizing Christ's hem, the sinful woman falling at the feet of Jesus, Lazarus coming back to life from his tomb. In doing this they consider themselves to be religious and to be wearing clothes that are agreeable to God. (*Homily* I; Mathews 1999: 59)

The configuration on the extant textile shows Christ standing in the centre, at the same time raising Lazarus to the right and being touched by the haemorrhaging woman on the left. Both the woman and Lazarus are labelled (Kendrick 1922: 66). The ordering of the miracles in the excerpt from Asterius could suggest that such a configuration of the raising of Lazarus with the haemorrhaging woman and/or the woman falling at the feet of Jesus was typical. This in turn might explain a curious reference in a sermon attributed to Ambrose, which names Martha as the woman healed from the flow of blood:

> Jesum Nazarum virum a Deo electum in vobis, virtutibus et signis et portentis approbatum…in quas vias beneficiorum circa humanum genus fuerit ingressus,…dum largum sanguinis fluxum siccat in Martha, dum daemones pellit ex Maria, dum corpus redivivi spiritus calore constringit in Lazaro. (*Sermon* 46.14; PL 17.698)

I am not aware of any other text which makes such an identification of Martha with the haemorrhaging woman. There is, however, a later legend of a Saint Martha, living in a convent in Monemvasia, who is miraculously cured from a constant haemorrhage by a vision of John the Evangelist (Herrin 1993). Perhaps these curious coincidences are all explicable as results of a diffusion of the kind of iconography depicted on the Egyptian textile. More importantly, Mathews notes that "representations of these miracles was ubiquitous" (1999: 59), appearing on dinner plates and private garments as well as sarcophagi, church walls and altar plates. This means that the Johannine Martha had a much greater visual profile than the Lukan Martha who appears not to have been depicted in early Christian art.

2.6 The story in the hands of its interpreters: Some conclusions

I have offered merely a few windows onto the interpretation of Martha in early Christian texts, hymns and images. Yet even this brief survey confirms that the multiplicity of readings that is observed in modern exegesis appears already in the early Church. Martha is considered the model of faith by some (Cyril of Jerusalem, Ps.Eustathius) and the model of unfaith by others (Origen, Amphilochius). She appears as the faithful mourner, particularly in hymnody and iconography, and as such offers both a point of identification and a model for the congregation. Martha's faithfulness can be, but need not be, tied to her confession of the Christ in John 11:27; indeed her faithfulness can even be tied to the very same point which is used to demonstrate her unfaith (11:39–40), as demonstrated by the comparison of the interpretations of Cyril and Origen. Clearly there is no such thing as 'the' interpretation of Martha in the early Church. The story is sufficiently open to allow for a multiplicity of readings, a feature of the narrative that increases its functionality. Martha can serve all sorts of purposes.

At the same time it is worth observing the significance of Martha's role. She plays a large role within the Gospel of John where she appears in a central narrative, speaks often and articulates the most complete confession of Johannine faith. She functions as a pair with John the Baptist, in that both make a significant pronouncement on the identity of Christ that serves to interpret the passion. This significance of Martha is seen also in early Christian interpretation. She assumes an important place within the Holy Week celebrations, in the context of 'Lazarus Saturday' and within funerary contexts, where the popularity of the motif of the raising of Lazarus reveals also the popularity of depicting the faithful sister who implores Jesus on behalf of the dead. Most striking of all is the place she receives in the homily of Ps.Eustathius where she is named 'a second Peter' and receives a place in the line of authoritative tradition that is passed from Peter to Martha to John the Evangelist. Thereby she is granted an extraordinary place of authority in this text.

One question has remained unanswered: why does Martha appear in this story of the raising of Lazarus? Given the close links that have been observed between the raising of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus, it is a little surprising to find Martha at the tomb of Lazarus but not at the tomb of Jesus. Of course this could be an outcome of history: a reflection of some kind of historical memory that lies at the base of the narrative. In that case D'Angelo (1990b) is probably on the right track, that Martha is remembered as a significant figure within the Johannine community. Conversely, if John composed the raising of Lazarus as a re-reading of synoptic texts, as Thyen (1992a) has suggested, the choice of Martha is surprising indeed. There are, however, a number of early Christian texts in which Martha does appear at the tomb of Jesus and it is to these that I turn next.

CHAPTER THREE

A DIFFERENT TOMB, A DIFFERENT STORY: THE *EPISTULA APOSTOLORUM*

The analysis of the Gospel of John revealed that the raising of Lazarus functions as a key turning point in the narrative and that Martha plays a key role within this Gospel. She appears as carrier of the evangelist's theology and announces the most complete statement of Johannine faith in the Gospel. As such she is received as a 'second Peter' not only by modern interpreters, but also by some early Christian exegetes. This chapter turns to a different tomb and a different story. For, as has already been observed, there are a number of texts that place Martha also at the tomb of Jesus. It will be the task of these next chapters to examine these texts, their origin, function and relationship to the canonical texts. Here I begin with the *Epistula Apostolorum* (*Ep. Ap.*), the earliest of the extant textual witnesses to the tradition placing Martha at the tomb of Jesus.

3.1 The *Epistula Apostolorum*

The *Epistula* purports to be a letter written by the eleven apostles to the Church in the whole world; a letter, moreover, which has been revealed by Christ himself. Most of the text, however, uses the form of a dialogue between the risen Saviour and his disciples occurring between his resurrection and ascension. Thus Hills suggests the *Epistula* is

> less a 'letter' than it is a 'book of revelation,' a handbook for the successors of the apostles similar in function to the Gospel of Matthew (with which it has much material in common). (1990b: 36)[1]

Alsup (1975: 128–130) calls it a new *Gattung*. Hartenstein identifies it as a 'dialogue Gospel,' though noting as a significant difference to other such dialogue Gospels the extended resurrection narrative and its grounding in the crucifixion: "behandelt wird die Auferstehung des Gekreuzigten, nicht die Erscheinung des Auferstandenen" (2000: 113).[2] Its immediate purpose is the refutation of Gnosticism, specifically a form of Gnosticism that is docetic and anti-apocalyptic. Thus the *Epistula*'s choice of genre, which closely matches the Gnostic dialogues between the risen Lord and various disciples, may be an attempt to combat Gnosticism with its own weapons (Hornschuh 1965: 6–7; Hills 1990b: 15; Hill 1999: 12).

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[1] Consistent with this view the opening of the text can be translated as "the book," not "the letter" (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 25), a translation which is preferred also by Klauck (2003: 153) since it fits better with the notion of the contents being 'revealed' (compare also Rev 1:1, 4).

That the gnostic opponents of the *Epistula* are part of the author's community is suggested by the parable of the ten virgins (Hornschuh 1965: 21–29; Hills 1990b: 146–168). It appears, moreover, that the opponents are both in the majority and probably occupying the leadership positions and offices in the community (Hornschuh 1965: 96–97; Hartenstein 2000: 105). Indeed, precisely the author's choice of pseudepigraphy would suggest this: a person holding an office might have relied on his own authority, or rather, on the authority of his[3] office. The inclusion of 'obedience' among the sleeping virgins (43.16) points in the same direction (so Hartenstein 2000: 105).

The *Epistula* was originally written in Greek, though this text has been completely lost. It survives in two translations: an incomplete Coptic translation in a fourth- or fifth-century codex which reveals marks of translation from the Greek (description of the manuscript in Schmidt [1919] 1967: 4–6), and a complete translation into Ethiopic extant in six late (sixteenth- to eighteenth-century) manuscripts,[4] whose text is not immediately derived from the Greek, but rather via the Coptic or Arabic (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 162). There is also a Latin fragment comprising a single leaf from the fifth to sixth century (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 20–22). The Coptic text, as both the older manuscript and translation closer to the Greek, is considered more authoritative.[5]

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[2] "[The text] treats the resurrection of the crucified one, not the appearance of the resurrected one."

[3] The author of the *Epistula* is unknown, but is more likely to be male than female because of the text's fiction of male authorship by the eleven apostles and the absence of any indicators suggesting either female perspective in the text or female authorship of the text.

[4] Description and comparison of the MSS in Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 4–20). C. D. F. Müller (1991: 250) incorrectly lists five MSS. The confusion results from the fact that Guerrier knows five manuscripts, but, according to Wajnberg, ignores one of them (*Or.* 795) almost entirely. Wajnberg adds to the five MSS listed by Guerrier an important new one, *Stuttgart Cod. Orient. fol. No. 49* (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 8–9). Müller has included this new MS, but overlooked *Or.* 795 (compare the listing of the five MSS in Müller 1991: 269). To these six MSS Hills adds a further seven or eight MSS which he claims are now available, but which he does not describe further. He suggests, however, that these indicate "two distinct groups of witnesses" (Hills 1990b: 7). There is some confusion about just how many new MSS there are: Hills lists one new MS catalogued by Ernst Hammerschmidt and six additional MSS in the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm

Three places of origin have been suggested for the *Epistula*. Carl Schmidt located it in Asia Minor, citing links with the fourth Gospel, the naming of Cerinthus, the concern with docetism and its Quartodeciman practice (*Ep. Ap.* 15). Hornschuh (1965: 103–115), following a number of earlier scholars (A. Baumstark, H. Lietzman, G. Bardy and W. Bauer), argued for an origin in Egypt, citing in support the fact that the text is extant only in Coptic and Ethiopic; a parallel to the Alexandrian liturgy of St Mark and a number of 'western readings.' Ehrhardt (1964) favours an Egyptian origin because of similarities with other Egyptian texts: the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* and the *Apocryphon of James*. While Hill (1999: 2–3) suggests that an increasing number of modern scholars endorse an Egyptian origin (for example Cameron 1982: 133; C. D. F. Müller 1991: 251), both he and Stewart-Sykes (1997) refute the arguments in its favour, making a case that is judged "very convincing" by Birger Pearson (2004: 49). J. J. Gunther (1971) and J. de Zwaan propose Syria. Hill considers the arguments for a Syrian origin more likely. Yet he also concludes that "though there may be little to disqualify Syria of the first half of the second century, there is also little that specifically commends it" (1999: 18).[6] Pérès (1997) has

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Library; however his subsequent listing of all of the manuscripts includes a further siglum that appears to indicate yet another manuscript which has not been identified (Hills 1990b: 7–8; but cf. the listing on p. 73 which does not include the unidentified MS). Hence it is not entirely clear whether Hills is working from 13 or 14 Ethiopic MSS. There has not been a new critical edition of the *Epistula* incorporating these MSS. Mohri's (2000) examination of the Easter narrative in the *Epistula* does not make use of these new MSS, while Hills does not provide a complete listing of all of the text variants in his discussion of the passage. Hence the present analysis is still dependent primarily on the critical edition of Schmidt ([1919] 1967).

[5] The Ethiopic version of the *Epistula* was transmitted together with a text better known in its Syriac version, the *Testamentum Domini*, which includes an apocalypse that is repeated in the *Epistula*; the whole was considered one work and named *Testament de Notre Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus Christ en Galilée* by Guerrier, who first published it (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 156–177; James 1953: 458; Hornschuh 1965: 1–2; Vielhauer 1978: 683). James highlights that "this prophecy ends with a passage which is identical with one quoted by Clement of Alexandria [*Protrep.* 10.94.4] from a source he does not name, only calling it 'the Scripture'" (1953: 485).

[6] One argument in favour of a Syrian origin could be the special mention of Damascus in *Ep. Ap.* 33, and particularly the prophetic agraphon cited there, "Behold,

proposed Syria, and more specifically Osrhoene, on the basis of common literary and theological features with the anaphora of the apostles Addai and Mari.

Both Hill (1999) and Steward-Sykes (1997) have argued persuasively for an Asian provenance for the *Epistula*. Stewart-Sykes bases his argument on "significant parallels in thought and background between *Epistula Apostolorum* and the new prophecy" (1997: 421). These parallels include Quartodeciman practice, the attitude towards prophecy, Christology, eschatology, and Gnosticism. Hill (1999) posits an Asian origin based on the description of weather conditions (*Ep. Ap.* 3, 34), which fit Asia Minor rather than Egypt (see also Gunther 1971: 82), literary and theological affinities with Asian texts, descriptions of social setting that match descriptions of Smyrna, and the description of earthquakes and a plague (*Ep. Ap.* 34), whose level of detail suggests more personal experience than merely adoption of a biblical motif. He postulates that the correspondence between *Ep. Ap.* 36 and Revelation 2:9–10 suggests "that the author of *Ep. Apost.* viewed his community's experiences in terms of Christ's words to the Church at Smyrna in Rev 2.9–10" (Hill 1999: 38).

Scholarly consensus dates the *Epistula* in the second century, with estimates varying from as early as before 120 CE to as late as 170 CE.[7] Hill (1999) dates the *Epistula* either in 142–149 CE, or just before 120 CE, based on an examination of geological and social historical evidence (particularly the dating of known earthquakes and famines in Asia Minor), combined with the notice of the 120 years to the parousia given in *Ep. Ap.* 17, which provides the *terminus ante quem*. Hill himself prefers the later of the two dates he offers because of the *Epistula*'s use of New Testament materials, its adoption of the Gnostic

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out of the land of Syria I will begin to call a new Jerusalem" (see Schmidt [1919] 1967: 369). However, if Schneider (1925) is correct in identifying this citation not as an agraphon but as a combination of citations from Isaiah, this argument falls.

[7] Most scholars use the date for the *parousia* given in *Ep. Ap.* 17 as a means for deriving a *terminus ante quem*. This date varies in the Coptic and Ethiopic versions, however, and is by no means unambiguous. Hills (1990b: 116 n. 73) identifies no less than eight approaches for interpreting this text which arrive at dates for the parousia ranging from 130 to 180 CE. Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 370–402), favouring the longer span (150 years) given in the Ethiopic as original, arrives at a date for the *Epistula* between 160–170 CE; and is followed in this also by some modern scholars (Elliott 1993: 556; Klauck 2003: 153). Conversely, a dating in the first half or middle of the second century is preferred by Hornschuh (1965), Hill (1999) and Stewart-Sykes (1997).

dialogue form and its connection to the *Apocryphon of James*. The work's liberal adaptation of texts and traditions and mixing of 'canonical' and 'non-canonical' texts suggests it pre-dates the rise of Montanism (so Stewart-Sykes 1997: 437).

Of particular significance for our purposes are the texts literary connections with other texts relevant to this study. Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 224–225) notes that the *Epistula* makes more extensive use of the Fourth Gospel than any other writing of the second century (see also Kaestli 1990b). It explicitly cites a written source:

> And every word which I have spoken to you and which you have written concerning me, that I am the word of the Father and the Father is in me…(31.11)

Hartenstein (2000: 101 n. 26) takes this as a reference to the Gospel of John; certainly the allusions are Johannine. Hillmer (1966: 29–41) identifies a number of other Johannine quotations in the text, as well as noting similiarities between the two in form and content (see also Hill 2004: 367–369). There are also parallels with the *Apostolic Church Order*, specifically with the list of apostles which is almost identical in both texts but differs significantly from canonical lists, particularly in naming John first, including Peter and Cephas as separate figures and including Nathanael as an apostle (see 8.4 below).

Given the appearance of Martha in all three texts these parallels are probably significant and raise the question of literary dependence and/or of location within a similar milieu. Thus Hornschuh (1965: 104–105) claims the presence of Martha in the texts as an argument for locating the *Epistula* in Egypt, arguing that this tradition of Martha at the tomb is predominantly Egyptian and Western (citing an Egyptian Amulet, the Ambrosian Missal, and Hippolytus' *On the Song of Songs*). As will become apparent, the tradition of Martha at the tomb is by no means limited to Egypt and the West. Questions of provenance aside, can the appearance of Martha within the *Epistula* be explained on the basis of this text's familiarity with the Gospel of John? I will return to this question after examining the text in detail.

3.2 The Easter narrative in the *Epistula Apostolorum*

Mohri (2000: 160–162, 165) divides the Easter narrative of the *Epistula* into three scenes: In the first (9.4–10.1) the women go to the tomb to anoint the body and meet the risen Lord; the second scene (10.2–11.1)—introduced with a strong "but" (ἀλλά, 10.2; Coptic II,10)[8] and marked by a change of scene—involves the sending of the women to the other disciples with the Easter proclamation and meeting with their disbelief. It ends with the injunction of Jesus "Let us go to them" (11.1). In the final scene (11.2–12.4) the women disappear from view as the focus shifts to the appearance of the Lord to the disciples and the proofs of his bodily resurrection. Jesus' invitation to "rise up and I will reveal to you what is above heaven" ends this scene and the narrative framework of the *Epistula*. The next phrase, "But what he revealed is this that he said…" (13.1) marks a clear break and the opening of the revelation dialogue which takes up the rest of the *Epistula* until the closing narrative frame recounting the ascension of the Lord (51). Interwoven into these three scenes are two key concerns of the *Epistula*, which seeks to demonstrate through its Easter narrative both the reality of the resurrection and the identity of the risen one (see also Hills 1990b: 70; Hartenstein 2000: 117).

The *Epistula* also includes an account of Jesus' crucifixion and burial. This narrative spans a mere five lines and serves only as an introduction to the Easter narrative:

> this is the Lord who was crucified by Pontius Pilate and Archelaus between the two thieves [the Ethiopic adds: "and was taken down from the wood of the cross together with them"] and who was buried in a place called the place of the skull. (9.1–3)

This account of the passion is interesting for its inclusion of a number of peculiarities, in particular the mention of Archelaus with Pontius Pilate, the suggestion that Jesus was buried at the place of the skull, and that this burial was undertaken not by Jesus' friends, but by the same people who had crucified him. These features will be considered further below, in relation to the origin of the *Epistula*'s Easter narrative.

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[8] The translation of the text used here is the English translation of C. D. F. Müller (1991) in *NTA* 1; the translation provided by Cameron (1982: 133–162) and the German translations of Schmidt/Wajnberg (Schmidt [1919] 1967), Duensing (1968), Müller (1990) and Mohri (2000: 158–159) are used for comparison purposes. Text references cite the chapter divisions given in *NTA*, but, following Hills (1990b), subdivide these chapters into verses in order to facilitate the citation of smaller units of text. German literature uses a citation system based on the numbering by leaf and line in the Coptic text. For clarity and ease of reference the complete text of the Easter narrative in the parallel Ethiopic and Coptic versions, providing both citation systems, is set out in the Appendix.

3.2.1 *The appearance to the women*

The Coptic text claims that three women "went to that place" (that is, the place of the skull; 9.3), but names only two: "Mary, the one belonging to Martha,[9] and Mary Magdalene" (9.4; Copt II,2–3). While the number three is reconstructed in the Coptic manuscript (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 39, 2*; compare Mohri 2000: 158), it appears in the Ethiopic manuscripts (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 36). That three women are involved is evident also in the Coptic text at 11.2 (Copt III,6–7), since the phrase "the Lord said to Mary and also to her sisters" requires at least three women. That Martha is among these three women is clear from 10.3, where Martha is sent first to announce the resurrection ("Martha came and told it to us"). Consequently Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 38 n. 2) proposes an emendation of the Coptic text at II,2 from ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲣⲑⲁ ("the one belonging to Martha") to ⲁⲟⲩ ⲙⲁⲣⲑⲁ ("and Martha"), on the assumption that the listing of Martha after Mary was transformed into an identification of Mary. Alternatively, if Martha had originally been listed next to ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲣⲑⲁ, the current text form would be the result of haplography, though the supposed original form of the list in that case would be stylistically crude (see Mohri 2000: 156, who supports Schmidt's emendation; conversely Hartenstein 2000: 108, 113 n. 84 opts for this longer version as original).

The Ethiopic version identifies the three women as "Sarah, Martha and Mary Magdalene" (9.4). Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 180) rightly notes that this is not a case of a simple scribal error, since the name occurs twice (9.4, 11.8) and does not vary in any of the extant Ethiopic manuscripts. He deems this evidence that all of the Ethiopic manuscripts derive from one archetype which itself already deviated from the Coptic on this point (but see p. 68 n. 4). The different name is intriguing because Sarah does not appear in any other canonical or extra-canonical Gospel traditions. Her inclusion is therefore surely significant, particularly since she is listed first (on the naming of the women see 3.4 below).

The women come to the tomb with ointment "to pour upon his body, weeping and mourning over what had happened" (9.5). In this the description adds a detail not mentioned in the Synoptics, which note only that the women come intending to anoint the body (Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1), or to "look at the tomb" (Mtt 28:1). Müller (1991: 279 n. 33) suggests this detail is derived from Mark 16:10, perhaps following the thesis of Hornschuh (1965: 14–15), who posits that the whole narrative is based on the longer ending of Mark (Mk 16:10–14). In Mark 16:10, however, it is not Mary who is "mourning and weeping," but rather "those who had been with him" (Mk 16:10) who are found mourning and weeping by Mary. The mourning is thus neither performed by the women, nor connected to the tomb and the anointing of the dead body. Moreover, while Mark 16:10 links πενθοῦσι καὶ κλαίουσιν, the *Epistula* uses λυπέω not πενθέω (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 39).

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[9] Müller's translation renders this as "the daughter of Martha" (*NTA* 1.254; "der Martha Tochter" in the German version; 1990: 210), unlike Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 39), Duensing (1968: 130), Cameron (1982: 136) and Mohri (2000: 156) who all translate the phrase "the one belonging to Martha" ("die zu Martha Gehörige").

Mohri (2000:160–161) argues that this detail of the narrative in the *Epistula* is derived from John 20, which recounts Mary "weeping" (κλαίουσα 20:11; also v.13–14) at the tomb. She notes that Mary Magdalene's weeping in the Johannine account is not associated with mourning, but explicitly with the loss of the body (20:13), and suggests that this corresponds with the women's weeping when it is recorded a second time in 10.1, after the women have discovered the loss of the body (9.6). This, claims Mohri, is sufficient explanation, and the theory of a further source for the mourning of the women over what has happened unnecessary ("die Annahme einer weiteren Quelle für die Trauer der Frauen wegen des Geschehen ist nicht nötig"; 2000: 161). Mohri thereby overlooks a crucial difference between the two accounts. She is aware, of course, that in the first instance the women in the *Epistula* weep and mourn "over what had happened" (9.5), rather than over the loss of the body. But she simply assumes that when the women's mourning and weeping is narrated a second time in 10.1, it is now in response to the loss of the body (which they discover in 9.6), rather than the continuation of their "weeping and mourning over what had happened" (9.5). In the Johannine account Mary is asked, "why are you weeping?" and gives as the reason the disappearance of the body (Jn 20:13). In the *Epistula*, however, the women are asked, "*for whom* are you weeping" (10.1). Their response is not recounted, but the form of the question fits the context of lamentation at a death. The text of the *Epistula* thus does not specify a changed meaning for the women's weeping and mourning (so also Hartenstein 2000: 113–114).

This is further supported by the explicit mention of mourning in both instances (9.5; 10.1), which does not appear in John 20:11–15. There is no indication in the Johannine account that Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb to perform any ritual actions connected with mourning. Her weeping is only recounted at the loss of the body, where it is therefore specifically not part of a mourning ritual. Conversely, the women of the *Epistula* come to the tomb with the intent to mourn over what has happened. Even if one allows that John 20:11–15 might serve as a source for the account, the *Epistula* has made an important change by depicting the women as engaged in ritual mourning and weeping.

Corley observes that in the canonical Easter narratives, "the women do not do the one thing one would expect of women under such circumstances: lament the dead" (2002: 128).[10] The *Epistula*'s description of the women as going to the tomb to lament the death of Jesus thus represents a significant difference to canonical accounts, but matches the *Gospel of Peter*. There the women go even more explicitly to the tomb to fulfill their duties of mourning and lamentation: "Although we could not weep and lament on that day when he was crucified, yet let us now do so at his sepulchre" (12.52; *NTA* 1.225). Similarly Peter and his companions mourn (*Gos. Pet.* 7.26), while the Jews, elders and priests lament their sin in crucifying Jesus (7.25).

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[10] Burial, and in particular a proper burial, were essential in honouring the deceased (Hope 2000: 120). Women played an important—though carefully regulated—role (Segal 1992: 148–151; Lindsay 2000; Corley 2002: 107–123; Schroer 2002).

> Just as in life a man's honour... is dependent in part on the behavior of the women of his family, his posthumous honor is dependent upon his wife and female relatives offering laments and tears for him. For a woman, engaging in ritual weeping also serves as a mark of her changed social status. (Ebersole 2000: 245)

Not only was lament an important means of maintaining the honour of an individual, but ritual mourning for a hero served to unite a city (Marshall 2000: 15).

Given this cultural context it is surprising to read the rejection of certain burial and mourning customs and of the veneration of the dead among (some of) the followers of Jesus in passages such as Luke 9:59–60; 11:47–48, 23:28a; and Mtt 9:15 (cf. Mk 2:18). That the rejection of such customs was universal among early Christians is unlikely because of the cultural importance of these customs. The inclusion of these texts would suggest, rather, that this was an on-going issue for the community. It has even been suggested that the passion narratives began as a women's lament tradition (Sawicki 1994; Crossan 1998: 572–573). Thus Corley deems as "not improbable" that the lament over Jerusalem (Lk 13:34–35)—which is to be performed by women (Lk 23:28b-31)—"began in the Q community as an actual lament by women over Jesus' and John's deaths" (2002: 103).

Whether one concurs with Corley's reconstruction or not, it remains notable, first, that the early Easter narratives connect appearances at the tomb with women, while appearances to men occur elsewhere ("in Galilee," Mtt 28:16–20; Mk 16:7; Jn 21:1; Gos Pet 14.60; "on a mountain," Mtt 28:16; *SJC* 1; *PS* 1.2; "on the road," Mk 16:12; Lk 24:15; Acts 9:3–5; "at table," Mk 16:14; Lk 24:30–31; "inside," Lk 24:36; Jn 20:19, 26; *Ep. Ap.* 11.2; *Apocryphon of James*) and second, that the canonical accounts omit all reference to weeping and lamentation. This omission is not accidental and may reflect cultural norms devaluing these ('womanish') expressions of grief as well as discomfort with certain mourning rituals, perhaps particularly those associated with magic or necromancy (see Corley 2002: 119–133). While women are depicted as mourners, at least in Matthew's passion narrative where they sit in mourning at the tomb (Matt 27:61; Strelan 1999), their laments and their weeping are not heard and they do not beat their breasts. Such weeping as does appear is connected not to mourning, but to the disappearance of the body (Jn 20:13). The rejection of women's expressions of lament is seen also in patristic commentators (Alexiou 2002: 29; see also Volp 2002: 180–185). Perkins (1995: 15–40) suggests that early Christians created a counter-cultural script in which death became a 'happy ending' at which mourning and lament were therefore inappropriate.

In all of the canonical Gospels the women who go to the tomb encounter divine messengers (Mtt 28:2–3; Mk 16:5; Lk 24:4; Jn 20:12; so also *Gos. Pet.* 13.55). Their absence in the *Epistula* is striking. It is the Lord himself who immediately appears to the women. It has already been observed that his question, for whom are you weeping? does not match the Johannine question, why are you weeping? (Jn 20:13, 15). The subsequent injunction "do not weep; I am he whom you seek" (10.1) finds no parallel in John. It also does not allow for any Johannine mistaken identity (compare Jn 20:15–16).

3.2.2 *The commission*

While the women's commission to announce the resurrection comes via divine messengers in the Synoptics (Mtt 28:7; Mk 16:7), in the *Epistula* the risen Lord himself commands, "let one of you go to your brothers and say, 'Come, the Master has risen from the dead.'" (10.2). In the Coptic version Martha goes first with the announcement; the Ethiopic names Mary, probably in assimilation with canonical accounts (10.3). The Coptic text is undoubtedly more original, not only as the older manuscript and direct translation from the Greek, but also as *lectio difficilior* in view of the canonical accounts (so also Mohri 2000: 157). That Martha should go first is certainly significant, particularly given the widely-attested tradition of Mary Magdalene as first apostle of the resurrection (Mtt 28:1,8; Mk 16:9; Lk 24:9–10; Jn 20:18). Moreover, Martha's mission is recounted in greater detail than the later mission of Mary (compare 10.3–6, 8–9); and indeed in greater detail than the canonical narratives. For while both the longer ending of Mark (16:11, 13) and Luke (24:11) include the motif of the women's announcement being disbelieved, neither records the dialogue between the disciples and the woman/women as does the *Epistula* (10.3–6). At the same time it is striking that the narrative does not recount Martha's announcement in direct speech (10.3) but only the response of the disciples. Hence it is not Martha's proclamation of the resurrection which is of interest to the text, but the failure of the disciples to believe it.

The disciples' rebuff, "What do you want with us, O woman?" (10.4), may echo the Johannine Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; (Jn 2:4). Martha is not named; she is 'woman' over against the men ('your brothers') to whom she has been sent and perhaps in this too there resounds a note of prejudice against women as credible witnesses. Their next question—"He who has died is buried, and could it be possible for him to live?"—draws attention both to the impossibility of a resurrection and to the physical death of Jesus, in service of the anti-docetic agenda of the text.[11] 'Rising from the dead' (10.5) here involves a reversal precisely of the physical aspects of death, including burial of the body. Martha's report of her mission ("None of them believed me that you are alive," 10.6) reiterates what has already been stated twice (10.4–5) and serves to emphasise the disbelief of the disciples.

A second woman is sent: Mary, according to the Coptic version (10.8), though it is unclear which of the two Marys listed in 9.4 is intended. The pervasiveness of the tradition of Mary Magdalene as apostle of the resurrection would suggest that she is the more likely candidate. If, on the other hand, Schmidt's emendation of the text of 9.4 (Coptic II,2) is correct, then the listing of the three women as 'Mary and Martha and Mary Magdalene' would suggest that 'Mary' more readily designates the other Mary, both because she is listed first in 9.4 and because one might expect that 10.8 would specify the Magdalene in the same way. The Ethiopic version lists Sarah as the second woman sent (Eth 10.8).[12]

The conflict created in the narrative by the disciples' refusal to believe the women is resolved by the Lord going to them himself (11.1). It is intriguing that the *Epistula* initially gives the impression that the women appear with Jesus to the disciples, since the Lord says, "Let *us* go to them"—though it is then said that "*he* came and found us inside" (11.1–2). In this transition the women disappear from view, and thereafter never reappear. While it is possible to assume the women are present in the subsequent dialogue, they neither participate, nor can they be included in the authorial 'we' of the *Epistula* which includes only the individually named eleven apostles (*Ep. Ap.* 2).

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[11] The phrasing, "could it be possible?" is typical for the *Epistula* (Hills 1990b: 84)—compare 17.7; 19.3; 24.2; 29.8; 42.1.

[12] Since there is only one Mary in the Ethiopic group (Sarah, Martha and Mary Magdalene), the 'Mary' who goes as first messenger to the apostles in that version (Eth 10.3) must be Mary Magdalene.

3.2.3 *The appearance to the men*

The ensuing encounter of Jesus with the eleven recalls the John 20:19–28 with its emphasis on disbelief and touching the risen Lord. Hills (1990b: 74–75) identifies parallels also with *1 Enoch* 13:9 and 14:24–15:1, particularly in the Ethiopic version of *Ep. Ap.* 11.1–12.3. While the issue in the previous scene had been the reality of the resurrection (the disciples' failure to believe the resurrection is stated three times in 10.4–6), in this scene the *identity* of the risen one is at stake. Again three times the disciples' failure to believe that it is the Lord who has come to them is narrated (11.3, 5, 6). In the first instance the disciples believe they have seen a ghost (φαντασία 11.3; compare Lk 24:37, where they believe it to be a πνεῦμα). In response the Lord identifies himself again: "I am your master whom you, Peter, denied three times; and now do you deny again?" (11.4). Peter's denials have not been recounted in the *Epistula*. Peter denied knowing Jesus (Mtt 26:72, 74; Mk 14:71; Lk 22:57), which Hills (1990b: 85) suggests may be the reason for its location here, where the issue is likewise the identity of Jesus. Yet a second time the disciples are not convinced (11.5) and are rebuked for their unbelief (11.6).

Two missions to announce the resurrection failed; two attempts to convince the apostles of the identity of the risen one failed. The third attempt—an invitation to touch the risen one—will succeed. Given the narrative's fondness for threes, it is hardly surprising that three disciples are invited to verify the identity of the Saviour (11.7): Peter and Thomas are asked to touch his hands and side, and Andrew is asked to observe whether his feet touch the ground. "For it is written in the prophet, 'The foot of a ghost or a demon does not join to the ground'" (10.8; on this agraphon see Hills 1990a; 1990b: 86–93; Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 43). Perhaps this saying connects with *Acts of John* 93 where Jesus' footprint is not seen on the ground and where Jesus is said sometimes to have a body, but other times to be immaterial and incorporeal.

"But we touched him," the narrative continues, echoing perhaps 1 John 1:1, "that we might truly know whether he had risen in the flesh" (12.1). While the invitation to touch the Saviour had been for the purposes of identifying him ("That you may know that it is I," 11.7), the narrative here shifts the focus back from the identity of the risen one to the resurrection itself, and specifically the resurrection *in the flesh*. The response of the disciples marks this as the climax: “and we fell on our faces confessing our sin, that we had been unbelieving” (12.2), thereby resolving the narrative complication in the plot created by the disciples’ unbelief. Touch has created faith in the resurrection *in the flesh* (σάρξ; compare also the insertion of the flesh in 11.6); and in response to this confession the Lord promises to “reveal…what is above heaven and what is in heaven, and your rest that is in the kingdom of heaven” (12.3).

3.3 The function of the narrative and the women in it

The *Epistula* is directed explicitly against the teachings of Simon and Cerinthus, the arch-gnostics of the early Church (1.2; 7.1; see further Schmidt [1919] 1967: 168–172, 194–198; Hornschuh 1965: 92–98; Mohri 2000: 171). Schmidt notes, however, that it is not gnostic dualism and cosmological speculations which are the focus of the refutation, but rather Christology and the docetic interpretation of the resurrection (ibid.: 171–172, 196; see also Stewart-Sykes 1997: 430–432). Cerinthus considered Jesus a human being born by natural processes, upon whom Christ descended at baptism, departing again prior to the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.26.1). This separation of the Christ from the human being who died and rose probably explains why the *Epistula* avoids all use of the name ‘Jesus’ in the Easter narrative. It’s central affirmation, rather, is that “this is the Lord who was crucified…and who was buried” (9.1, 3) and, most importantly, that it is the Lord, not merely Jesus, who has risen from the dead. At the same time Stewart-Sykes notes that according to the definition of docetism “as a belief that Jesus Christ was not truly in the flesh but simply an appearance” (1997: 430), Cerinthus was not, strictly speaking, a docetist. Insofar as can be ascertained from the description of Irenaeus, Cerinthus would have had no problems affirming the resurrection in the flesh. It is the identity of the risen one which is at stake. The *Epistula*, with its double focus on both the identity of the risen one and on the resurrection in the flesh, opposes both of these positions. The same dual emphasis is apparent in the opening creedal affirmation that “our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (is) God and Son of God” (3.1) who “became flesh” (3.8) and was “heard and felt [by the apostles]…after he had risen from the dead” (2.2).

What role, then, do the women and their mission play in this agenda? On the one hand, it could be suggested that they serve as model disciples since, unlike the apostles, they appear to have no doubts about either the truth of the resurrection or the identity of the risen one. Moreover, their role could serve to heighten the culpability of the apostles, who fail to believe not only one, but two women sent to them. Neither of these is likely, however. In the first instance, the text shows no interest in the belief or otherwise of the women at all. Their response to the announcement of the resurrection is not recounted (10.2–3), nor are they praised for their faith or explicitly held up as an example in contrast to the apostles. While the invitation of the Lord to the women, "let us go to them" (11.1), might imply a critique of the disciples' failure to believe the women (so Mohri 2000: 167), this critique is not made explicit in the rebuke of the disciples, in which the focus is rather on the denials of Peter (11.4) and the preaching of Jesus (11.6). It is these which should have led the disciples to believe; the women and their message receive no mention. The apostles come to faith without the mediation of the women: it is the appearance of the Lord himself, not the proclamation of the women, which is the basis for their faith. Rather than a means of increasing the culpability of the disciples, the double sending of the women more likely serves to redeem them from any charge of listening to the words of a foolish woman, such as was leveled at the Christians by Celsus (Origen, *C. Cels.* 2.55, 59–60).

The goal of the text is the faith of the apostles. They are the guarantors of the tradition, the ones who verify the identity of the risen one and the validity of the resurrection in the flesh. It is their faith, not that of the women, which is the foundation for the community. Given the centrality of touching as a means of 'truly knowing that he is risen in the flesh' (12.1), the fact that the women do not touch the risen Lord is significant (cf. Mtt 28:9; Jn 20:17) and prevents the women from serving as witnesses for the resurrection of the flesh. Their faith is not examined–their faith is irrelevant, for it is to the men that the secrets will be revealed (12.1); the men who will write and proclaim "things great, astonishing, real" to the church (1–2). As such, even while the women bear testimony within the narrative as first messengers of the resurrection, their testimony is subordinated to the testimony of the apostles, both within the narrative itself—since the apostles are not convinced by their testimony but by seeing and touching the risen Lord themselves—and within the structure of the text which, even while including their story, allows them to speak only via the fictive authors of the text, the male apostles (Mohri 2000: 171–172).

The women are not the source of the kerygma of the resurrection. Their sole role is as messengers who prepare the way for the appearance of the Lord to the apostles. They do not participate in the dialogue with the Saviour that occupies the remainder of the text. In this exclusion the text may reflect suspicion towards women as teachers and mediators of revelation (compare Hippolytus, *Ref. Haer.* 8.12).

3.4 The significance of the names

Scholars have generally paid little attention to the substitution of women's names in the Easter narratives. Thus, for example, Mohri argues that in view of the variability in women's names in the Synoptic passion and Easter narratives, the appearance of other women in the Easter narrative of the *Epistula* is not surprising, nor the differing names in the Ethiopic version ("darf das Auftreten anderer Frauen in der Ostergeschichte nicht überraschen, ebensowenig die Verschiedenheit der Namen in der äthiopischen Überlieferung"; 2000: 160). One gains the impression that authors randomly picked women's names and attached little attention to who it was, who appeared at the tomb. There is a further puzzling aspect to the variation of women's names in the Easter narratives, however, which renders such an explanation simplistic. While the names of the women vary between texts, they do not vary within the manuscript tradition of a single text. The scribes neither emended nor confused the names of the women in one Gospel with those in another. Thus Salome only appears in Mark, never in Matthew or Luke. Joanna only appears in Luke, never in Mark or John. In the same manner, it appears that none of the many manuscripts of the Ethiopic *Epistula*, copied as late as the eighteenth century, ever changed the name 'Sarah' into one known from the canonical texts. Conversely, Bauckham (1991: 265–266) observes that the Lukan women, Susanna and Joanna, never appear in lists of women disciples, even in accounts of women's visits to the tomb which seem indebted, directly or indirectly, on Luke (*Ep. Ap.* 9–11; Hippolytus *On the Song of Songs* 24; Turfan M 18; Epiphanius *Pan.* 78.13.2). This intriguing feature of the traditions deserves more careful investigation in itself. It suggests that the variability in the naming of women cannot simply be attributed to scribal 'confusion' or to an androcentric lack of care. Bauckham

(2002: 297–304) argues cogently for the care taken by the evangelists in preserving different lists of women's names, both among the different Gospels and in recording different lists of witnesses at crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Precisely this care evidenced by the canonical texts and their copyists suggests that the naming of Martha in the *Epistula* is not accidental either.

Given the significance which male apostles attach to receiving a resurrection appearance (Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8), the naming of particular men who have seen the risen Lord is hardly accidental. On that basis the varying women's names could similarly serve to authorise these women (as has been argued in the case of Mary Magdalene; e.g., Brock 1998; 1999; 2003; Schaberg 2002; Hearon 2004b). Certainly such an agenda appears to motivate the resurrection appearances to various apostolic figures, and probably underlies the authority accorded to Mary Magdalene in a number of early Christian texts, particularly the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* and the *Gospel of Mary* (see Hartenstein 2000). Conversely, the inclusion of Martha in the *Epistula* has been explained not as a means of authorising her, but as a means of undermining the authority of Mary Magdalene as part of the text's anti-gnostic agenda (so Bovon 1984: 53).

There are several reasons why this is unlikely as an explanation for the change of names in the *Epistula*. For one thing, Mary Magdalene is still included in the *Epistula* and, as Hartenstein (2000: 125) notes, being named last need not imply inferiority (cf. John 19:25). Mary Magdalene is named last in the Ethiopic version (9.4), but goes first to announce the resurrection (10.3) and is addressed as representative of the group (11.1). More importantly, there is little evidence that the *Epistula* knows gnostic texts which accord a high status to Mary Magdalene.[13] Apart from the possible significance of the changed names in 9.4–11.1, nothing in the *Epistula* addresses questions of the status of women, much less the authority of specific women. Moreover, unlike texts in which Mary (Magdalene) plays a significant role, the *Epistula* shows no interest in maleness/femaleness. Finally, it has already been noted that the climax of the Easter narrative in the *Epistula* is the (male) apostles' recognition of the resurrection in the flesh. The women serve as means towards this end: not their faith in the resurrection is significant, but that of the apostles. They serve merely as the messengers; once they have completed their task they are dispensable. Their authority appears to be irrelevant to the text and the selection of their names cannot be explained on that basis. There is no evidence, therefore, to support Bovon's hypothesis that the inclusion of Martha serves as a means of undermining the authority of Mary Magdalene.

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[13] The fact that Levi plays a significant role in the *Gospel of Mary*, but does not appear in the *Epistula*'s list of apostles, speaks against reference to this particular text. Conversely, the notice that Adam chose the light (39.4–5) might echo the designation "Adam, Eye of Light" in *SJC* (Hartenstein 2000: 106). Hornschuh (1965: 94) identifies the opponents of the *Epistula* as Basilideans, while Hartenstein (2000: 106) notes connections also to Valentinian ideas of the bridal chamber (*Ep. Ap.* 43.1). In favour of Valentinian connections would speak the fact that Irenaeus mentions that they appropriated the Gospel of John (*Adv. Haer.* 3.11.7; Poffet 1990: 313).

A more fruitful avenue might be to ask about possible hermeneutical and/or intertextual functions of the names. Perhaps the naming of Martha is intended to evoke another known Martha story, such as the raising of Lazarus.[14] Having just observed the lack of interest the *Epistula* displays in the women, however, the argument that Martha serves as an intertextual marker appears no more plausible than the suggestion that her naming serves to undermine the authority of Mary Magdalene. For readers familiar with the Johannine narrative the naming of Martha could recall the raising of Lazarus and, once evoked, some meaningful connections can be drawn. But there is little in the text of the *Epistula* to suggest that such an association is intended. Moreover, while the close links to the Gospel of John were noted earlier (see 3.1), there does not appear to be any other allusion to John 11:1–44 in the *Epistula*.[15] Hence there is no reason to suppose that this narrative held particular significance for the author.

It is neither plausible that the names of the women in the Easter narratives are irrelevant, nor has any credible reason for a substitution of the name Martha for another name been found. One other possibility remains. Perhaps the author includes her simply because she was already part of the tradition which he had received. In other words, the *Epistula* is not introducing novelty by placing Martha at the tomb of Jesus, but is preserving an earlier tradition. The *Epistula* is a witness to an Easter tradition that predates it in which Martha was included among the women at the tomb. This possibility can be substantiated from the text.

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[14] W. G. Müller coins the term 'interfigurality' to describe the appearance of a literary character known from one text in another text, observing that

> names belong to the most obvious devices of relating figures of different literary texts.... The shift of the name of a fictional character, whether in its identical or in a changed form, to a figure in another text is, as far as the linguistic aspect is concerned, comparable to a quotation. (1991: 102–103)

[15] While Lazarus is also named within the *Epistula*, the reference is to Jesus' descent to "the place of Lazarus" (27.1 Coptic). This reference connects less with John 11:1–44 than with Luke 16:23 (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 316, 455–459). Lazarus functions not as the symbol of the person who comes back to life (the 'four-day dead' of John 11:1–44 and later patristic reflection on this text), but as the prototypical righteous person (in contrast to the rich man of Luke 16:19–31).

3.5 Origins of the Easter narrative in the *Epistula Apostolorum*

Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 222), Hornschuh (1965: 14), Mohri (2000: 165) and Hartenstein (2000: 126) all deem the *Epistula*'s Easter narrative a creation of the author, though they differ on the sources used. Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 216) suggests all four canonical Gospels were available to the author in written form. Hornschuh excludes Mark from this, but suggests the author knew (and used) the longer ending of Mark in the creation of the Easter narrative. At the same time he concedes that the canonical Gospels were not the only source for the author, who also used non-canonical sources deemed equally authoritative ("die der Verfasser als gleichwertig voraussetzt"; 1965: 12).

Mohri (2000: 164–165) disputes Hornschuh's assessment that the Easter narrative is based on the longer ending of Mark, since all of the supposed Markan parallels can be explained on the basis of Luke and John.[16] She argues, furthermore, that Luke and John did not serve as written models ("schriftliche Vorlagen"; 2000: 165). It is also the case that the evidence for the longer ending of Mark all post-dates the dating of the *Epistula* (see Parker 1997: 124–147). This means that the direction of influence is more likely the reverse, that the longer ending of Mark is based on the *Epistula* and that even if some such version was already known to the author of the *Epistula*, it was probably not known as part of the Gospel of Mark. Also significant is the conclusion of Parker, that

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[16] The longer ending of Mark is perhaps evoked particularly by the double sending of messengers in the *Epistula*. It differs from the longer ending, however, in that the women are explicitly sent by the risen Lord and on the same occasion. In Mark there are two separate encounters of disciples with the risen Lord. First, one involving Mary Magdalene (16:9–11), and then one with two other disciples, whose gender is not specified, but whose "walking in the country" (16:12) more readily recalls the Lukan vignette of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13) than the *Epistula*. In neither case are the disciples in Mark explicitly sent to proclaim the resurrection, nor is any direct dialogue recounted. Common to both the longer ending of Mark and the *Epistula* is the appearance of the Lord to the disciples and his rebuke of their unbelief, though the similarity is only general, and could be derived also from Luke 24:11. While Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 220–221) and Hornschuh (1965: 14–16, 105) conclude that the author of the *Epistula* was familiar with the longer ending of Mark, Mohri (2000: 164) is correct in her observation that both the structure and content of the narrative could as readily be explained with reference solely to Luke 24:1–32, though even here the similarities are only general.

> the Long Ending is best read as a cento or pastiche of material gathered from the other Gospels and from other sources, slanted towards a particular interpretation…the verses are a summary of a number of events recorded at greater length in the other Gospels. (1997: 138, 140)

In this the longer ending of Mark differs from the Easter narrative of the *Epistula.* Both the later dating of the longer ending of Mark and its literary character suggest that it be excluded as a possible source for the *Epistula*.

The original premise of Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 222), that the Easter narrative has a secondary character and represents a free literary creation of the author, remains unchallenged (Hornschuh 1965: 14; Mohri 2000: 165), with the possible exception of Hills, who notes that the names of the women are "to be attributed to independent, albeit late, tradition" (1990b: 81) but also finds little to distinguish the *Epistula*'s narrative from canonical versions. Hartenstein (2000: 119–120) acknowledges the possibility that the *Epistula* may draw from non-canonical sources, but subsequently assumes the canonical Gospels serve as the sources and does not explore the possibility of alternative sources further. Similarly Bauckham considers the *Epistula* "undoubtedly dependent on the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John" and suggests that its

> lively and original version of the story of the women at the tomb is probably to be explained as an example of "re-oralization", in which the storytelling freedom of the oral tradition continued in the period when Gospel texts were used in a still predominantly oral context. (2002: 269 n. 19)

A comparison with the canonical empty tomb stories makes the *Epistula* appear a pastiche of the canonical stories. It has three women like Mark (16:1), but gives them different names. They come with spices to anoint the body (Mk 16:1), but also weep (Jn 20:11). As in John (20:11), they look into the tomb as opposed to entering it, but the word used for tomb, τάφος, is found only in Matthew (28:1; compare 27:61, 64, 66), not in John (where μνημεῖον is used). The notice that the women did not find the body recalls Luke (24:3), while the appearance of the Lord most closely parallels John (20:14), though the question he asks differs. The sending of two sets of messengers resembles none of the accounts, though parallels have been suggested for the longer ending of Mark (16:9, 12), while disbelief of the women's announcement is known also from Mark (16:11, 13) and Luke (24:11). Mark (16:14) recounts the rebuke of the disciples for their unbelief only in indirect speech, while the *Epistula* recounts it in direct speech. John (20:25, 27) includes the theme of touching Jesus to verify the resurrection, but has only one disciple who disbelieves and touches Jesus. John also makes no reference to the feet of Jesus touching the ground. Strikingly absent in the *Epistula* are any references to divine messengers or angels and to rolling away the stone, both of which feature in all four canonical accounts.[17]

It would be difficult indeed to arrive at this text if one were to use the four canonical versions as written models. Mohri (2000: 165) is consequently surely on the right track, that the Gospels, insofar as they served as sources at all, did not provide literary sources. In comparison with the canonical texts as we have them, it is clear that the *Epistula* can at best be considered a 'free retelling' of canonical versions. Though in this case it might be asked when a 'free retelling' becomes a legitimate alternate version. Is the Easter narrative of Matthew to be judged a 'free retelling,' 'secondary' or 'derivative' because it uses Mark as a source, for example?

Moreover, the argument that the New Testament Gospels served as sources for the *Epistula* is founded on an implicit assumption that these Gospels already had (or were fast assuming) canonical status in the church of the author. Yet such status is unlikely for the early- to mid-second century (Koester 1989; Poffet 1990). Bovon therefore calls for a different perspective.

> We must learn to consider the gospels of the New Testament canon, in the form in which they existed before 180 CE, in the same light in which we consider the apocrypha. At this earlier time the gospels were what the apocrypha never ceased to be. (1988b: 20)

While it was noted earlier that the *Epistula* makes explicit reference to a written text (31.11), it does not name that text. It can be assumed that the author knows one or more texts deemed authoritative; but it cannot be assumed that these authoritative texts correspond with the canonical Gospels, much less the canonical Gospels in the form in which they are known later,[18] nor that they do not include other texts. For the *Epistula* also includes also extra-canonical narratives, such as the vignette of Jesus being taught letters and responding to his teacher's demand to "say alpha" with "first you tell me what Beta is" (4.2–3). While Schmidt claims the author is here citing the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (6.3), the text is actually closer to the (much later) *Infancy Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (7.38.1) in wording and is identical with neither of them. It has consequently been suggested that the *Epistula* is here citing oral tradition (Hornschuh 1965: 9–10; Koester 1984: 1484; Hills 1990b: 51).

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[17] The inclusion of the stone in the Ethiopic version (9.6) is identified as secondary by Mohri (2000: 161).

Koester (1994: 297) has argued that second-century authors, even if possessing literary texts, did not quote from them (see also Koester 1989). The significant differences between the New Testament Gospels and the narratives in the *Epistula* support this contention. Moreover, according to Koester, literary dependence can only be shown to have occurred if a text reflects the redaction of its source—specifically Lukan traits for example—since otherwise one cannot be certain that the text is citing this source rather than the wider tradition (see also Poffet 1990). With the exception of the thesis of Raymond Hillmer (1966) on the Gospel of John in the second century, which includes an extensive study of parallels between the *Epistula* and the Fourth Gospel, such a careful source-critical analysis has not been undertaken in relation to the *Epistula*. Scholars have been content merely to note parallels with canonical Gospels and to assume these parallels serve as evidence for the use of these Gospels as sources. To the contrary, such parallels might indicate no more than that both the *Epistula* and the canonical texts drew on the same traditions, particularly given the lack of close linguistic parallels between the *Epistula* and the canonical texts.

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[18] Koester warns that since the earliest extant witnesses post-date the autographs by more than a century and the first century of an ancient text's transmission is known to be "the period in which the most serious corruptions occur," the "assumption that the reconstruction of the best archetype for the manuscript tradition is more or less identical with the assumed autograph is precarious" (1989: 19), all the more so in the case of Gospel manuscripts which were used in liturgy, apologetics and catechesis, were consequently likely copied frequently and subject to frequent alterations and modifications. He charges that text "critics of the New Testament writings have been surprisingly naïve in this respect" (ibid.; but cf. Wisse 1989; who is much more confident about the stability of the textual transmission of the Gospels). Parker (1997) suggests, furthermore, that the whole notion of an 'autograph' is questionable in the case of the New Testament.

Hillmer cites only one "secondary parallel" between the Easter narrative of the *Epistula* and the Gospel of John. The women looking inside the tomb "could be regarded as an allusion to John," but

> the parallel is neither exact nor extensive enough to be very significant and it is clear from the absence of narrative material from John that the author of the Ep. Ap. did not consider John a source for this kind of information. (1966: 39)

In the case of the one Gospel whose relationship to the *Epistula* has been scrutinised from a source-critical perspective, the conclusion is thus negative. This is all the more significant given the close affinities between John and the *Epistula* noted earlier (see 3.3). If the canonical Gospels served as sources for the Easter narrative of the *Epistula*, one might expect that the Gospel of John would feature large among them. Hartenstein's (2000: 120) observation that the *Epistula* may derive its Gospel narrative from another source entirely therefore deserves more consideration than merely as a preamble to aligning parallels with the canonical Gospels.

Hartenstein herself concludes that the *Epistula* is a free retelling of canonical accounts, particularly those of Luke and John (2000: 121–126). However, she does not discuss the summary of the crucifixion and burial which opens the Easter narrative and which includes two interesting non-canonical traits, the naming of Archelaus alongside Pontius Pilate, and the suggestion that Jesus was buried by the Jews rather than by Joseph of Arimathea. The notice that "he was taken down from the wood of the cross together with [the two thieves]" (9.2) appears only in the Ethiopic version and is considered a later addition by Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 37), but Hornschuh (1965: 12–13) is surprised to find such a deviation from the canonical tradition in so late a text. He proposes that the phrase was purged from the Coptic text because of its offensive suggestion that Jesus was buried by the Jews in a mass grave alongside the other criminals. The inclusion of these non-canonical details suggests, so Hornschuh, that the text preserves a tradition which is so strong in the circles of the author that it managed to retain its place alongside, indeed in preference to, the tradition of the burial by Joseph of Arimathea.[19]

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[19] The *Epistula* is not the only text to preserve an alternative burial tradition: *Gospel of Peter* 6.21–9.34 suggests that it was the Jews who took Jesus down from the cross, rather

These two extra-canonical features of the crucifixion and burial narrative provide evidence that, even if the *Epistula* had access to the New Testament Gospels in written form, or cited these Gospels from oral tradition, it also had access to another passion tradition which differs from the canonical tradition, but which the *Epistula* considers authentic. In the absence of evidence to the contrary there is no reason to assume that this alternative tradition did not also include an account of the resurrection, nor that the author of the *Epistula* considered this source reliable in its account of the crucifixion and burial, but unreliable in its Easter narrative. This implies that the variations from the New Testament Easter narratives derive not (just) from redaction of any canonical sources, but (also) from the inclusion (and redaction) of this alternative source.[20]

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than Joseph asking for the body. Traces of a burial other than by Joseph of Arimathea appear also in canonical texts. Acts 13:27–29 suggests the Jews buried Jesus (see also Jn 19:31 and a variant reading of 19:38 which suggests the Jews took him away). Similarly Justin (*Dial.* 97.1) suggests "they buried him"—"they" appearing to be the opponents of Jesus rather than his disciples (see further Brown 1994: 1218–1219).

The question of historicity of the account is not relevant here; though in general a dishonourable burial of Jesus by the Jewish authorities is taken as historically more plausible (e.g. McCane 1993). Similarly De Zwaan (1933: 349) suggests that the *Epistula Apostolorum* preserves an alternative tradition and that Archelaus refers to Julius Archelaus who married Mariamne, daughter of Agrippa I in 41 CE (see also Hills 1990b: 78).

[20] Hill's assessment that "the *Epistula* seems to be advertising the notion that the authoritative sources are fixed and now closed" (2004: 371) is not convincing. For he himself is immediately forced to admit "other aspects of the work which would seem to the modern reader to belie this principle," specifically the story of Jesus being taught letters which, claims Hill,

> may have come to the author from oral or textual sources, but it has to be observed that he uses this legend, in any case, to serve the cause of the orthodox confession. (2004: 371)

This is surely to beg the question, not only about the appropriateness of equating 'orthodoxy' with 'canon,' particularly in the second century, but also about the very argument Hill has been attempting. If this story came from "oral or textual sources," on what basis (save an anachronistic reading of later notions of canon into the second century) is one to conclude that these sources are less authoritative for the author than the "authoritative sources" which are "fixed and closed" and, apparently, do not include these other sources? Quite to the contrary, it seems to me that if one wishes to interpret the *Epistula* as "advertising the notion that the authoritative sources are now fixed," the clear implication is that the contents of this 'fixed canon' recognised by *Ep. Ap.* differs from the boundaries of the later canon. Alternatively, the inclusion of 'non-canonical' narratives might be taken as evidence that the *Epistula* does not yet operate with any notion of canon, and is consequently not constrained to 'canonical' sources. Either way, there is no avoiding the fact that the *Epistula* cites narratives other than those now appearing in the canon, nor that these 'non-canonical' narratives are cited without reservation or qualification. Hill's use of the term 'legend' is misleading

Given that the *Epistula* shows little interest in the women at the tomb (and none in their faith or their testimony) it seems unlikely that the author has edited the names from his sources. More likely the unknown non-canonical source already included these names and, as in the case of the naming of Archelaus and the burial with the thieves at the place of the skull, the author of the *Epistula* has here chosen this alternative source rather than any New Testament Gospels. Such a theory is not new: it was advocated already by Baumstark (1913; 1914), who proposed that the Easter narrative of the *Epistula Apostolorum* derives from the lost *Gospel of the Egyptians*. Significant for Baumstark is particularly the naming of Martha and the unusual list of apostles, both of which match the *Apostolic Church Order*, which will be considered in chapter eight. Irrespective of whether Baumstark is correct in his identification of the source, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the naming of Martha among the myrrhophores is not to be attributed to the author of the *Epistula*.

The Easter narrative of the *Epistula* is thus best read as a fifth version of the empty tomb story alongside the four canonical texts. It need not be reduced to a 'free retelling' or 'pastiche,' much less a 'secondary' account, any more than John is a 'pastiche' of the synoptics or Matthew a 'free retelling' of Mark. Like the other four versions it has its own integrity and, like them, it serves as an important witness to the shape and variety of the traditions at the time of its writing. It attests a version of the Easter narrative circulating at the time of its writing in which Martha was one of the women at the tomb. This is to claim nothing more for the *Epistula* than has already been claimed for other non-canonical texts, in particular for some of the apocryphal Gospels (Koester 1984, 1980; Smith 1992). It is also consistent with current research on the relationship of written text to oral tradition which emphasises that this relationship was much more complex and nuanced than previously envisaged (Cartlidge 1990; Bailey 1991; Parker 1997).[21]

It can further be hypothesised that the non-canonical passion and Easter tradition used by the *Epistula* is at home in Johannine circles. The

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in this context and needs to be justified much more carefully, in particular if it is to be applied selectively to some narratives of the *Epistula* but not others.

[21] The suggestion of Bauckham noted earlier, that the *Epistula* represents an example of "re-oralisation" (2002: 269 n. 19) nevertheless maintains the secondary and derivative nature of the *Epistula* (ibid.: 263). It is precisely this secondary nature which I would argue requires greater justification in view of the intriguing non-canonical features of the narrative and its early dating.

significance of John for the *Epistula* is apparent already in its listing of the apostles which is headed by John rather than Peter (2.1). The affinities between the *Epistula* and the Fourth Gospel have been observed repeatedly (Loewenich 1932: 57–59; Schmidt [1919] 1967: 224–225; Hillmer 1966: 28–50; Hill 2004: 366–374) and studied in most detail by Hillmer, who concludes that "the Gospel of John is not only used by the writer of the Ep. Ap. but is the most important of his written sources" (1966: 47). Hill describes the *Epistula* as "a work which relies on the Fourth Gospel to an extent unprecedented among early Christian sources to this time" (2004: 369). In view of Koester's (1994) warning against assuming literary dependence where there might rather be a dependence on common tradition, perhaps one could paraphrase Hill to describe the *Epistula* as a work which relies *on Johannine tradition* to an extent unprecedented among early Christian sources to this time. In other words, the *Epistula* could serve not only as evidence for the use and reception of the Fourth Gospel in the second century (the explicit research interest of Loewenich 1932; Hillmer 1966; and Hill 2004), but also provides an important witness to the shape and content of Johannine tradition at that time. If one recognises that both the *Epistula* and the Gospel of John draw from the same well of tradition, rather than assuming that they stand in a linear literary relationship, then the question is not only, does the *Epistula* know the Easter narrative of the Fourth Gospel, but also, does the author of the Fourth Gospel know an Easter narrative similar to the one recorded in the *Epistula*?

Two features of the Gospel of John point in that direction. First, it is clear that the author of the Johannine Gospel knows an Easter story in which more than one woman goes to the tomb. For although only Mary Magdalene is said to go to the tomb (20:1), when she returns to the disciples she announces, "they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and *we* do not know (οὐκ οἴδαμεν) where they have laid him" (20:2). Who are the other persons hidden behind this 'we'? Insofar as the author of the Fourth Gospel knows any or all of the synoptic accounts, they could be the women from one or other of these versions. Inasmuch as the author also knows an independent stream of tradition, they could equally derive from Johannine rather than synoptic tradition, and there appears to be no *a priori* reason for favouring the former over the latter option. Second, precisely a familiarity with an Easter narrative similar to the one preserved in the *Epistula* could explain the naming of Martha and Mary at the tomb of Lazarus in John 11.

It was observed in the last chapter that if the raising of Lazarus is not a historical reminiscence (and the presence of Martha and Mary is therefore not to be explained as a historical fact) but represents rather a re-reading of other texts, in particular the Lukan parable of Lazarus and the rich man (so Thyen 1992a; Byrne 1990), then the inclusion of Martha and Mary is something of a puzzle. Of course mourning women are an appropriate feature at the tomb of a dead man, particularly if the tomb of this dead man is to serve also as a prefigurement for the tomb of Jesus, since women feature centrally at that tomb. However, all the more so it therefore seems strange for the author to choose the Lukan Martha and Mary as the mourning women as opposed to choosing women from the Easter narrative. Why not name Joanna and Susanna at the tomb of Lazarus? The Lukan Martha and Mary do not appear obvious candidates for this role. If, on the other hand, the sources of John 11 include not just the Lukan parable of Lazarus and the rich man, but also an Easter narrative akin to the tradition preserved in the *Epistula Apostolorum*, then the choice of Martha and Mary makes sense. The women at the tomb of Lazarus are then indeed women known to belong also at the tomb of Jesus.

It is significant that the early to mid second-century dating of the *Epistula* (Hornschuh 1965; Stewart-Sykes 1997; Hill 1999) is not much later than the date typically assigned to the final redaction of the Gospel of John. Not only can it therefore be expected that both texts drew from the same fluid pool of oral tradition, but, as Gerhardsson observes,

> [written] versions find it difficult, in those circles within which the tradition lives on, to compete with the tradition itself. It appears unnatural to regard living traditional material as something written, simply because written versions have come into being. (1961: 199)

The Gospel of John explicitly does not preserve the entire corpus of Johannine tradition (Jn 20:30) while the *Epistula* draws most deeply from the well of Johannine tradition. It can readily be supposed that the *Epistula* preserves something of the 'many other signs' which are not written in the book of John, and that these other Johannine traditions preserved in the *Epistula* include details from the empty tomb narrative, including perhaps the names of the other women, who left only a trace in John 20:2. Tellingly, the burial by Joseph of Arimathea, which appears in all four canonical versions (Mtt 25:57–60; Mk 15:43–46; Lk 23:50–53; John 19:38–42), is altered both by the Fourth Gospel (where Nicodemus is added) and by the *Epistula* (where Joseph is not named). This, too, is consistent with the proposal that both draw on a common pool of tradition in which there are either two alternative burial traditions, or in which the burial by Joseph was not yet a fixed part of the tradition, such that the author of the Fourth Gospel felt free to include and augment it, while the author of the *Epistula* felt no need to include it at all. It can be concluded that the Easter narrative of the *Epistula* attests a tradition that places Martha at the tomb of Jesus which predates it. It is plausible, if not certain, that this tradition belongs to (or was transmitted in) the same circles as the Johannine traditions.

3.6 Conclusions

The *Epistula Apostolorum* represents the earliest extant witness to a tradition placing Martha at the tomb of Jesus and naming her as first person to announce the resurrection. The narrative features several traits unknown from the New Testament accounts: the death of Jesus at the hands of Archelaus, his burial alongside the two thieves at the hands of those who crucified him, the depiction of the women lamenting the death of Jesus and the inclusion of Martha and Mary among the myrrhophores. While it includes an extensive narrative involving the women, their encounter with the risen Lord and their sending to the eleven apostles, the text is written from the perspective of the eleven. The women serve merely as envoys who carry the message from the risen Lord to the eleven. The failure of the eleven to believe the message is of central interest; the women's faith and their testimony are of no consequence. The eleven arrive at faith not through the testimony of the women, but rather through their own immediate encounter with the risen Lord and their own verification of his resurrection in the flesh. The women, who do not touch the Lord, are not qualified to testify to the central creedal affirmations of the *Epistula*.

In response to the question what authority a resurrection appearance might confer upon Martha—whether it might serve to authorise her much as it does Paul (1 Cor 9:1)—the initial conclusion from this analysis appears to be negative: the text shows limited interest in the role of the women as witnesses of the resurrection and Martha does not gain any status as authoritative witness in the *Epistula* on the basis of her appearance in the Easter narrative. This does not mean, however, that the naming of Martha is insignificant. For, as has been argued here, precisely the lack of interest in the women renders it unlikely that the text has edited the names of the women. Martha the myrrhophore is not an invention of the *Epistula* but rather a part of the tradition inherited and recounted by its author.

While the *Epistula* makes little of the women and their role, it cannot be presumed that such is the case also for the source from which the *Epistula* derived the narrative, or from the other contexts in which the story was told. For example, it has been proposed here that this tradition is probably Johannine. Such a provenance is consistent both with the priority accorded to John in the *Epistula* and the predominance of Johannine influence recognised in this text. If this is so, then the question what authority Martha derives from her role as resurrection witness can be asked not only of the *Epistula*, but also of the Gospel of John. It will be recalled from the last chapter that Martha assumes a central place in the Fourth Gospel as carrier of Johannine tradition. If the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore is at home in Johannine circles, then her central place in the Fourth Gospel is likely derived from (or at least influenced by) her role in the Easter narrative.

The stories of the raising of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus are linked by multiple points of contact that were identified in the last chapter (see 2.2). The presence of Martha, explicit in John 11 and (in the case argued here) also implicit in 20:2, then functions as one more link. If the audience of the Gospel of John knows that the 'we' who did not find the Lord in the tomb are Martha, Mary and Mary Magdalene, then Jesus' words to Martha, "did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God" (11:40) receive a new trajectory that reaches not only to the raising of Lazarus, but also to the resurrection of Jesus, which Martha also sees. Her confession of "the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world" (11:27), coming, as it does, in response to Jesus' announcement that he is the resurrection, receives an even more explicit Easter context, for it is then heard coming from the mouth of a woman who has indeed seen the risen Lord.

The Easter narrative as it is recounted in the *Epistula* suggests that apostolic authority and status is not necessarily accorded to Martha as a result of her role as resurrection witness (she does not attain such status in the *Epistula*), but that such status might have accrued to her in other contexts in which the story was told (this could be the source of the high status accorded to Martha in the Gospel of John, for example). In any case, the *Epistula* is one of numerous witnesses to this tradition. Questions of apostolic authority as a consequence of Martha's role as myrrhophore play an explicit role in the *Commentary on the Song of Song* of Hippolytus, which is examined next.

CHAPTER FOUR

APOSTOLA APOSTOLORUM: HIPPOLYTUS ON THE SONG OF SONGS

The *Commentary on the Song of Songs* of Hippolytus is significant not only for the appearance of Martha, but also because it is the earliest extant text to name the myrrhophores 'apostles to the apostles.' Yet the presence of Martha in the text has failed to impress most modern exegetes, who have been quick to correct her naming as a "mistake," proposing that the text be emended to read "Mary Magdalene and Mary" (Chappuzeau 1976: 56 n. 80), or that Martha has been conflated with Mary Magdalene (Nürnberg 1996: 228; Haskins 1993: 63). Some do not even notice the presence of Martha and the absence of the epithet 'Magdalene' (de Boer 1997: 61; Eisen 1996: 57). The notion of the Magdalene as *apostola apostolorum* has become so firmly entrenched that scholars have found it difficult to conceive that it is *not* Mary Magdalene, but Martha and Mary who receive this designation here. Yet, observes Cerrato,

> the Hippolytan designation of Martha and Mary as 'apostles to the apostles' (clearly in the plural) seems to stem from a period much earlier than the one which gave rise to the Magdalene term 'apostle to the apostles.' (2001: 294)

4.1 The Commentary on the Song of Songs

The *Commentary on the Song of Songs* is attributed to Hippolytus, whose identity is a matter of scholarly debate. Generally the Hippolytan corpus is now attributed to at least two writers (Nautin 1992; Stewart-Sykes 1998: 47; Baldovin 2003: 523–524). Cerrato (2002) suggests that the commentaries were written not by a Roman bishop, as traditionally held (Marcovich 1986), but by an eastern writer whose provenance was unknown to both Eusebius and Jerome, though both were familiar with his writings (Eusebius *HE* 6.20.2; 6.22.1–2; Jerome *de vir. ill.* 61). He argues for a writer located in Asia Minor in the second century—which also places him earlier than the early- to mid-third-century date generally given for Hippolytus of Rome (Marcovich 1986; Nautin

1992). Chappuzeau (1976) suggests that the *Commentary*, or at least the section of it which is of particular interest here, originated as a sermon preached at Easter, on the basis of a comment in the Armenian version: "[Christ] glorifies the mystery of the resurrection, which we celebrate today, which sacred holy feast extolling we want to rejoice with the angels" (25.10; cf. Garitte 1965: 2.49). The homiletical setting is apparent in the frequent address of the audience (2.31; 13.2; 13.3; 15.1; 16.2; 18.2; 19.2).[1]

The commentary was originally composed in Greek, but only fragments and a much later paraphrase remain in this language. The only complete extant version is a Georgian translation made prior to the ninth century from an earlier Armenian translation (Bonwetsch 1902: 17). However, according to Garitte (1965: 2.II),

> Le traducteur inconnu qui, au IX^{e} siècle au plus tard, a fait passer de l'arménien en géorgien les traités d'Hippolyte était loin d'être un interprète de talent; sa version est souvent obscure, incohérente, voire incompréhensible; même en faisant la part des omissions et des détériorations qui peuvent déparer les deux copies étroitment apparentées qui nous en sont conservées, il reste que la version géorgienne n'est souvent qu'un mot à mot inintelligent—et partant souvent inintelligible—, qui reproduit à l'aveugle les termes de son modèle... Il est souvent nécessaire, pour comprendre le texte géorgien, de deviner le substrat arménien sur lequel il repose.[2]

There are also extant fragments in Armenian, Slavonic, Greek and Syriac. The Georgian text and some Armenian fragments were first published with a Russian translation by Marr (1901), which served as a basis for a German translation by Bonwetsch (1902), who also included Slavonic, Greek and Syriac fragments. A Greek paraphrase of the commentary on the Song was discovered in a thirteenth-century MS in the Bodleian library and published by Marcel Richard (1964). This paraphrase follows the commentary closely, though with substantial omissions and occasional elaborations. The standard critical edition of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* with a Latin translation was prepared by Garritte (1965) on the basis of the Georgian and Armenian texts.[3]

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[1] Compare also Salzmann (1994: 381–386) who discusses the sermons preserved in the Daniel commentary and David and Goliath, but not the commentary on the Song of Songs.

[2] "The unknown translator who, in the ninth century at the latest, translated the works of Hippolytus from Armenian into Georgian was far from being a talented translator: his version is often obscure, incoherent, even incomprehensible. Even taking into account the omissions and deteriorations that mar the two closely related copies which have been preserved, the Georgian version often remains word for word unintelligent—and consequently often unintelligible—, blindly copying the terms of its model... In order to understand the Georgian text, it is often necessary to guess the Armenian substratum on which it is based."

Fortunately most of the chapters which refer to Martha are extant also in Armenian and the Old Slavonic fragments and in the Greek paraphrase. It is not easy to decide, however, which of these four versions preserves the best text. Cerrato judges the Georgian version more original than the Greek paraphrase on the basis of its greater length and its "dependence on several canonical gospel texts on which the Greek paraphrase does not" depend (2002: 184 n. 2). On what basis such a dependence (particularly on Luke and Mark, over against a dependence on the Matthean version in the Greek paraphrase) should be evidence for greater originality is unclear. Cerrato further claims, without further explanation, that the Georgian version "also appears to transmit more of the original text than the Armenian fragments" (2002: 184 n. 2). Cerrato bases his own analysis and translation on Garitte's Latin translation of the Georgian text. I will also use the German translations of the Georgian, Slavonic and Armenian texts provided by Bonwetsch (1902) and the Greek paraphrase (Richard 1964). The Georgian version is used as the base text because it is the most complete version, not because it is judged to be closest to the original.[4]

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[3] A further complication in discerning the original text form of the *Commentary* is that the Georgian version preserved in the two extant MSS (designated T and J), is not the original Georgian form. The two manuscripts preserve a text form that is closely related, though without revealing immediate dependence (Garitte 1965: 1.VI). A comparison of another text preserved in these two MSS, *Demonstration* VI of Aphraates, which is extant also in another Georgian MS (designated A) that preserves a clearly different text type and whose more authentic form can be verified on the basis of Syriac and Armenian versions of the *Demonstrations*, reveals omissions, modifications and corruptions in T and J in comparison with A. While these deficiencies can be identified and corrected in the case of the treatise of Aphraates, such is not the case for the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* in which T and J are the only extant Georgian witnesses.

[4] I am not aware of any complete English translations of the *Commentary*, though Cerrato (2002) includes translations of substantial portions of the sections of the commentary dealing with Martha. Where possible, his translation is used here.

4.2 The Easter narrative in the Commentary

Song of Songs 3:1–4 describes the search of the woman for her lover at night, her encounter with the watchmen and finally with the one whom she has been seeking, holding him and not letting him go until she leads him into her mother's house. Hippolytus finds here an image of the women going to the tomb of Jesus and their encounter with the risen Lord.

4.2.1 *The women at the tomb*

> 24.1 Because of this she (i.e. the spouse) even then cries out and says, 'By night I sought him whom my soul loves. I sought him and did not find him. The watchmen who were guarding the city found me. "Have you not seen him whom my soul loves?"' 2. O blessed voice! O blessed women shown as a type in previous times! Because of this she (i.e. the spouse) even cries out and says, 'By night I sought him whom my soul loves.' Behold this is fulfilled in Martha and Mary. With them the synagogue sought with diligence the dead Christ, whom they did not know to be alive. For so she teaches us and says, 'By night I sought and found him whom my soul loves.' 3. The writings of the gospel say, 'The women went by night to seek [him] in the tomb'. 'I sought him and I did not find him'. 'Why do you seek the living among the dead?' And not one of his own was found there, for the sepulchre was not his habitation, but heaven. Why do you search on earth for him who sits on exalted thrones? Why do you seek the most glorious of all in a contemptible tomb? Why do you search for the perfected in a grave? Behold, the stone has been rolled away. Why do you seek in the tomb him who, behold, is in the heavens filled with grace? Why do you search for that which has been released, as if bound and shut up there in prison? 4. See the new counsel perfected there, for so she cries and says, 'I sought him and did not find him. The watchmen who were guarding the city found me'. Who were those who found her, except the angels who were sitting there? And what city were they guarding except the new Jerusalem, the body of Christ? 'The watchmen who were guarding the city found me'. The women ask these, 'Have you not seen the one [our] soul has loved?' 'They, however, said: "You seek whom? Jesus of Nazareth? Behold, he has risen."' (Georgian version; Cerrato 2002: 185–188)

The search at night for the lover provides the key for the analogy between the Song of Songs and the Easter narrative of the Gospels (Chappuzeau 1976: 57). The searching woman of the Song serves as an image or type of the women who search for the body of Jesus. However, the typology is doubled, for it is drawn not only with the women of the Easter narrative, but also with the synagogue searching for Christ

(24.1–2; 25.6). It is the search of the synagogue which is the goal of the typology and it is towards this goal that Hippolytus reads the image.

Given that the canonical Gospels differ on the number of women who go to the tomb (one in Jn 20:1; two in Mtt 28:1; three in Mk 16:1; and more than three in Lk 24:10), the fact that Hippolytus chooses two women could indicate that he is basing his narrative on the Matthean account at this point, though the vague reference to "the women" who observe the burial and return to the tomb appears rather Lukan (Lk 23:55; 24:1). Since the two women in Mtt 28:1 are named "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary," not Martha and Mary, it has been suggested that the text of Hippolytus is here corrupt (Chappuzeau 1976: 56 n. 80). This is not the case: the text works consistently with two women, and consistently with Martha and Mary. Both names occur in all extant versions, Georgian, Armenian and Slavonic, as well as in the Greek paraphrase (Bonwetsch 1902: 60; Richard 1964: 152).[5] Moreover, a Syriac fragment of Hippolytus' commentary on Exodus likewise names Martha and Mary: "the angels to both Mary and Martha gave the news that the Bread had been sent from the Resurrection" (Brock 1981: 199). Rather than assuming an error or "mixing of identities" (Nürnberg 1996: 228; Haskins 1993: 63) on the part of Hippolytus, much less on the part of later copyists, the text should be taken as it stands: Hippolytus suggests that the two women who go to the tomb are Martha and Mary.[6]

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[5] The Armenian version does not include Martha at 24.2, where it reads, "behold this is fulfilled in Mary and her synagogue." However it includes Martha in 25.3 and clearly intends several women in the Easter narrative (Garitte 1965: 2.44, 46).

[6] The error is more likely to be on the part of modern interpreters who are guided by their literary lenses and their familiarity with the canonical texts, presuming that the women must at least include Mary Magdalene (e.g., Haskins 1993: 63–67)—despite the fact that the Magdalene is never named. It is possible that Hippolytus has fused Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany, but such fusion should be argued rather than assumed and all the more so if, as is usually done, Mary of Bethany is thereby assumed to be subsumed beneath the Magdalene (so, for example, Petersen 1999: 255). Precisely because Mary Magdalene has assumed such an important place in modern feminist research caution is in order to avoid reading more into the text than is warranted.

Cerrato offers a much more careful analysis of the question whether Mary is to be identified with Mary Magdalene and a much more cautious conclusion that

> Hippolytus…was privy to a strong tradition about the sisters of Bethany which we no longer possess…[and] that a tradition did flourish in the second century which placed Martha and Mary of Bethany (perhaps with Mary Magdalene already identified as Mary of Bethany) at the tomb and made much of their presence. (2001: 296)

With Martha and Mary "the synagogue sought with diligence the dead Christ, whom they did know to be alive. For so she teaches us and says, 'By night I sought and found him whom my soul loves'" (24.2). Cerrato finds here "a second non-canonical element" (the naming of Martha being the first). He offers four suggestions for its interpretation:

> (1) a group of Jewish women who accompanied Martha and Mary...; (2) women of the synagogue, or a synagogue of women; (3) a synagogue of which Martha and Mary were members; or (4) the Jewish people as a whole, who did not accept the messianic identity of Jesus. (2002: 186)

Yet the appearance of the synagogue elsewhere in the commentary suggests that this is a typological move on the part of Hippolytus. In his exposition of Song of Songs 1:3 ("your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is perfume poured out; therefore the maidens love you"), Hippolytus suggests that Christ is the nard poured out into the world, a fragrance after which the faithful long, and which the young women love. He then asks about the identity of the young women (puella iuvenes virgines) and concludes that these are the churches (ecclesiae, 2.32–33).[7] The Song continues, "the king has brought me into his chambers" (1:4). The image of Christ as bridegroom who leads into the bridal chamber is common in patristic exegesis (Murray 1975: 131–142). In this case, the one who is thus led into the bridal chamber is the synagogue (3.1 Armenian; the Georgian reads "populus"; Garitte 1965: 2.30).

In 5.1 the synagogue appears as the one who believed that she would be justified through penance, who sought to kill Christ because he accepted the Gentiles, and who asks Christ, "the one whom my soul loves," where he grazes, where he rests at noon (6.1; cf. SS 1:7). Thus the synagogue appears as the nation Israel which longs for Christ and yet,

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Yet precisely because Hippolytus knows such an alternative tradition, there seems to be no *a priori* reason to assume that Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene were already fused in that tradition. The only piece of evidence that might point in that direction is the fact that Hippolytus never mentions Mary Magdalene (so Cerrato 2001: 295). Yet that silence might also be explained either as a refusal to name the heroine of gnostic groups, consistent with the Hippolytan antipathy to gnostic theologies, or as evidence that Mary Magdalene did not in all times and places hold equally high status. Rather than fusion, it seems equally possible that Hippolytus has substituted Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany, and/or that this text stands as an early witness not to any such fusion, but rather to the tradition of Martha and Mary of Bethany as myrrhophores.

[7] Perhaps this way of talking about churches as women corresponds to "the elect lady" and her "elect sister" of 2 John 1, 13.

paradoxically, has rejected him. She mourns, "you have cast me aside and left me. You went to the Gentiles and I have been left an orphan" (6.1; see also Chappuzeau 1975: 123–124). Christ immediately responds and reveals himself, calling the people (vox quae vocat populum, 7.1) with the words of Song of Songs 1:8. At 8.7 the synagogue is called to repentance so that it too may preach Christ. A little later Christ's call, "come to me all you who are weary and burdened," is again addressed to the synagogue: "Who are these burdened ones, if not the synagogues [Armenian: synagogue] to which he spoke?" (19.1). The synagogue is Israel who has not received Christ, yet yearns for him and is called by him (see further Bonwetsch 1897: 53–56). When the synagogue appears again in chapter 24, it is thus not as an element proper to the Easter narrative, but as a figure belonging to the commentary as a whole. Moreover it appears primarily as a theological, rather than a historical entity.

The synagogue appears first alongside Martha and Mary: "Behold this is fulfilled in Martha and Mary. With them the synagogue sought with diligence the dead Christ, whom they did know to be alive" (24.2 Georgian).[8] The subsequent speech, "By night I sought and found him whom my soul loves," appears to be spoken by the synagogue, which suggests that Martha and Mary themselves have become types of the synagogue (so Guillaume 1980: 565).[9] As in the exposition of the previous image, Hippolytus moves freely between the image of the Song of Songs and the Easter narratives of the Gospels. One of the delightful aspects of this approach is that thereby the Easter narrative is recounted from the perspective of the women. Unlike the canonical narratives, which report the story of the women's journey to the tomb in the third person, the Song is written in the first person and, in large parts, in the voice of the woman. The search for the lover is told by the woman in her own voice. As prophetic image of the women going to the tomb, the woman's voice of the Song becomes, in the exegesis of Hippolytus, the voice of Martha and Mary as they search for the dead Christ:

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[8] The Old Syriac omits the synagogue, which, as the easier reading is perhaps an emendation. The Armenian reads, "Behold this is fulfilled in Mary and her synagogue." Martha may have been omitted here, for she clearly appears later in the Armenian text (25.3). Conversely 'Mary and her synagogue' may be the more difficult reading. Does it recall "the Jews who were with Mary" of John 11:45?

[9] Compare also the *Commentary on Daniel* 1.16 in which Susanna appears as a symbol of the church (Cantalamessa 1993: 60 and 158 n.b.). The typology of Martha and Mary as symbols of synagogue and church appears also in patristic exegesis of Luke 10:38–42 (see chapter 7).

> Have you not seen him whom my soul loves...By night I sought and found him whom my soul loves...I sought him and I did not find him, (24.1, 2, 3; see SS 3:1)

to which the watchmen reply (in the words of Lk 24:5): "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (24.3).

The text moves from singular to plural: "I sought...the women went...I sought.... Why do you (pl.) seek...?" (24.2–3). While this fluidity no doubt derives in part from the merging of the Song of Songs (with its one woman protagonist) with the Easter narrative that has two, it also springs from the analogy with the synagogue searching for Christ. The text is difficult to follow—and the complexities arising from multiple translation have already been noted. The inclusion of the synagogue as the one searching for Christ needs to be considered carefully, however. It is striking precisely because it is not required by the text—it intrudes into the typology of the woman lover of the Song as type of the women at the tomb; and yet it is not surprising in the overall plan of the commentary in which the synagogue searching for Christ—and speaking to Christ—has already appeared several times (3.1–2 Armenian; 6.1).

Indeed, a close parallel to this passage appears at 6.1 (in the exposition of SS 1:7):

> Tell me you, whom my soul loves, tell me, O Christ, answer me anything, I beg you, where do you graze, where do you rest at noon? You have cast me aside and left me. You went to the Gentiles and I have been left as an orphan.

The speaker is the synagogue (see also 5.1). The searching and the plaintive cry, "where are you?" are a close parallel to 24.1–3. Thus the intrusion of the synagogue into the image of the women going to the tomb and the close parallels with 6.1 would suggest that she is the speaker in the text (Chappuzeau 1975: 131), and to her are addressed the questions:

> 'Why do you seek the living among the dead?'...Why do you search on earth for him who sits on exalted thrones? Why do you seek the most glorious of all in a contemptible tomb? Why do you search for the perfected in a grave? Behold, the stone has been rolled away. Why do you seek in the tomb him who, behold, is in the heavens filled with grace? Why do you search for that which has been released, as if bound and shut up there in prison? (24.3; Cerrato 2002: 187)

The "new counsel perfected there" (24.4) therefore consists in this, that the synagogue seeking the dead Christ does not find him. She is found by the watchmen/angels who are guarding "the new Jerusalem, the body of Christ." The synagogue has failed to find Christ, because she searched on earth for what is in heaven. She has yet again failed to find the one whom she sought (cf. 6.1). The argument is reminiscent of Melito of Sardis' *Peri Pascha* in which likewise "the Jerusalem below" is replaced by "the Jerusalem above" and Israel lies dead, "but [the Lord] has risen from the dead and gone up to the heights of heaven" (*Peri Pascha* 45, 100; Hall 1979: 23, 57; on this homily see Salzmann 1994: 258–270).

This also explains the cryptic remark, "not one of his own was found there, for the sepulchre was not his habitation, but heaven" (24.3). Both Bonwetsch (1902: 61) and Garitte (1965: 2.44) suggest an emendation of "not one of his own" to "nothing of his." Yet if the protagonist is the synagogue who searches on earth for the one who sits on exalted thrones, then "not one of his own" makes good sense. Since Christ is not found on earth and in a sepulchre, neither are "his own" (the members of the church), since they are with him. Just as the synagogue was left orphaned in 6.1 while the sheep are being grazed by Christ elsewhere, so here she cannot find him, nor any of his own.[10]

In the exposition of the next verse of the Song, Hippolytus moves away from the image of the searching synagogue; but he picks the theme up again at the very end of the section dealing with the Easter narrative in a comment which makes explicit the conclusion which he is reaching here: ultimately the resurrection will silence the synagogue. "Now having done this he appears to them since hereafter, beloved behold, he pacifies the synagogue and the church is glorified" (25.10 Georgian; Cerrato 2002: 192).[11] Pacat might be taken in the sense of being "subdued" rather than merely "pacified." It is in this latter sense that Bonwetsch translates "da wird stille die Synagogue" (Georgian) and "bringt er zum völligem Schweigen die Synagogue der Juden" (Armenian), in both cases the sense being that the synagogue is still, silent. Such a view appears more consistent with the overall flow of the *Commentary* and the attitude to the synagogue expressed in it. The fact that this notice concludes the whole comment on the Easter narrative suggests that the relationship of the synagogue to Christ, her search, her failure to find, her silencing by the resurrection, her replacement by the Church is at the heart of the matter for Hippolytus.

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[10] Compare Chappuzeau who observes that in 6.1 the focus of Hippolytus is on the lostness of the synagogue ("Die ganze Aufmerksamkeit richted sich auf die Verlorenheit der Synagoge"; 1975: 126). That same emphasis on the lostness and left-behindness of the synagogue reappears in the Easter narrative.

[11] "Nunc e factis his (apparet) quia, dilecti, abhinc ecce pacat synagogam, et Ecclesia glorificatur." The Armenian reads: "Nunc, factis his, o dilecti, abhinc nunc ecce pacans cessare-facit Iudaeorum synagogas (et) glorificat mysterium resurrectionis" (Garitte 1965: 2.49).

4.2.2 *The appearance of the Saviour*

Song of Songs 3:1–3 describes the search for the lover; the next verse describes the encounter.

> 25.1 'And a little while after I left them.' And as they have turned around and departed, the saviour meets them. Then that saying was fulfilled, 'Behold, a little while after I left them, I found him whom my soul has loved'. 2. The saviour, therefore, answered and said, 'Martha, Mary'. And they said, 'Rabbi', which means, 'my Lord'. 'I found him whom I have loved, and would not let him go'. For it was then that she took hold of [his] feet, holding them tightly. And crying out he says to her, 'Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my father'.[12] And she (i.e. the spouse) held on and said, 'I will not let you go until I lead you and bring you into my heart'. 'I will not let you go until I lead you into my mother's house and into the treasuries of the one who conceived me'. The love of Christ was gathered in [her] breast, and she did not wish to be moved. Because of this, crying out, she says, 'I have found him, and will not let [him] go'. O blessed women, who cling to his feet as he is about to fly into the air! 3. Martha and Mary said this to him. The counsel of Martha was shown beforehand through Solomon: we are not letting you fly away. Ascend to the father and offer the new sacrifice, offer Eve, and she will no longer stray, but [with her] hands cling with desire to the tree of life. Behold, I have clung to [your] knees, not as the cord which may be severed, but I have held [fast] to the feet of Christ, that I not stray, lest you fling me to the earth. Take me to heaven. O blessed women, who did not wish to be separated from Christ! (Cerrato 2002: 188, 189)

The encounter with Christ combines elements from the Song of Songs, Matthew and John. Again Hippolytus moves fluidly between singular and plural, between one woman and two. Again it is clear that the inclusion of Martha is not accidental. The analogy from the woman in the Song to the woman at the tomb, and thence to Eve could be drawn more easily if there were only one woman in the Easter narrative. The Johannine narrative, which is evoked in the cry of Christ, "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my father" (25.2; cf. Jn 20:17), readily offers such an Easter narrative with only one woman. Yet Hippolytus chooses the complex path of weaving two women, Martha and Mary, into the account. This proves troublesome indeed for translators: the Georgian, Armenian, Old Slavonic and Greek paraphrase vary in their choices of singular and plural forms in 25.1–3; but none of them opts for the simpler method of simply excising one of the women out of the account, not even the Greek paraphrase, which does not mention the women's names at this point and yet maintains the shift from singular to plural verb forms (Richard 1964: 153).

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[12] The Old Slavonic version continues in the plural tense: 'But they grasped his feet. And he said to them: 'do not touch (pl.) me, I have not yet ascended to my father. But they held on, saying, 'I will not let you go…' (cf. Bonwetsch 1902: 63).

As in John 20:17, Jesus forbids the woman/women to hold on to him. Martha and Mary prove themselves more tenacious than Mary Magdalene, however: they refuse to let go (25.2–3). The "mother's house" of the Song of Songs becomes the image of the heart:

> I will not let you go until I lead you and bring you into my heart. I will not let you go until I lead you into my mother's house and into the treasuries of the one who conceived me. (25.2)

For this act of tenacity the women receive the blessing of Hippolytus—"O blessed women, who cling to his feet as he is about to fly into the air!" (25.2)—in a delightful picture of a thwarted ascension, of an attempt to 'hitch a ride' to heaven on the ankles of Christ. Nürnberg suggests that Hippolytus here has moved from a typological to a salvation historical interpretation (1996: 229), finding in Martha and Mary a new Eve (25.3). While there certainly is a salvation historical element, the interpretation is nevertheless typological. Martha and Mary become the type of Eve. This is the

> counsel of Martha…shown beforehand through Solomon: we are not letting you fly away. Ascend to the father and offer the new sacrifice, offer Eve, and she will no longer stray, but [with her] hands cling with desire to the tree of life. (25.3)

In translating "counsel of Martha" Cerrato has followed the literal reading of the Georgian text. Garitte suggests reading "iustum mysterium (*litt.* consilium)" for "Marthae mysterium," amending the Georgian "mart'ayssa" ("Martha") which appears in both extant manuscripts, to "mart'alsa" ("just"; Garitte 1965: 2.46 n. 19). This seems a plausible emendation given the parallel Armenian and Old Slavonic versions, which both read "just mystery" ("das gerechte Geheimnis"; Bonwetsch

1902: 64; "justum mysterium"; Garitte 1965: 2.46). Moreover the 'great' and 'just' mystery has already appeared elsewhere: "O nova mysteria (*litt.* consilia) et veri iusti" (2.29); "magnum mysterium" (2.32); "magna mysteria" (8.1); "iusti oris manifestata mysteria quae in parabolis his apparuerunt" (17.2); "O iterum permagna mysteria! O iusta praedicatio!" (26.3). Here in 25.3 the mystery entails the reversal of the fallen state of Eve in Martha and Mary. While the connection between Eve and the Virgin Mary is made by other patristic writers,[13] this is, to my knowledge, the only instance in which Martha is thus connected to Eve. Weyermann (2002: 613–614) suggests that the Eve-Mary typology, which is connected particularly to the annunciation, is a later development than the typology connecting Eve with the church, which originates in the conception of Israel as the bride of God.

The text proceeds with a long prayer offered on behalf of Eve.

> 4. Because of this she says, 'A little while after I left them, I found him whom my soul loved'. Take my heart, with the spirit mix it together, strengthen it, fulfil it, that it might even be joined to [your] heavenly body. Mix this my body with [your] heavenly body. Drink [it] as wine, take [it] up, make [it] come to heaven, then a new cup mixed, that the woman may follow whom she wishes and that she may not err, no longer wounded at the heel, nor having attained the wood (i.e. the tree) of knowledge. Hereafter then, [she] has been made a conqueror over the wood (i.e. the tree) through death. 5. 'Receive Eve, that she may no longer give birth with groaning; for sorrows, groanings, and sadness have been cast out. Receive Eve, who from now on walks in ordination. Receive and know this office, which has been offered to the Father. Offer Eve as new, no longer naked, no longer is her garment the leaves of the fig tree, but she is clothed through the Holy Spirit; for she has put on a good garment which is not corrupt. Christ has carried her—not of course naked, though the linen cloths lay in the tomb, but he was not naked. For Adam was not nude at first, but put on the renewed adornment of sinlessness, gentleness and incorruptibility, from which (when he was) separated he was found naked; but (in which he) now is revealed again clothed. (Cerrato 2002: 190; 1997: 269; translation of 25.5b mine)

The voice speaking appears at once as the voice of Eve ("take my heart") and as a voice praying for Eve ("that the woman may follow whom she wishes...," 24.4; see also 24.5), which could be the voice of Martha and

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[13] Justin, *Dial.* 100.4–6; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.21.10; 3.22.4; 5.19.1; Tertullian, *de carne Chr.* 17.5–6. See also *Ep. Diog.* 12; Pseudo-Chrysostom, *In Res.Dom.* 1; Weyermann (2002) and Murray (1971).

Mary or of the author/preacher (Cerrato 1997: 269). The prayer asks for the union between Eve and Christ, described as the joining of her heart with the spirit, her body with Christ's heavenly body and symbolised in the "new cup mixed" of wine, through which she becomes "no longer wounded at the heel, nor having attained the wood (i.e. the tree) of knowledge" (24.4). In Martha and Mary who cling to Christ as the new Eve the 'original sin' is undone and Eve is made a conqueror over the tree rather than the woman who 'fell' to temptation. This pre-fallen state is elucidated in detail: the prayer asks that she be received by Christ from this point forth, that she no longer bear children with groaning; that she no longer be naked and clothed with fig-leaves, but with the Holy Spirit. Moreover, she is described as 'walking in ordination,' and having an 'office.'[14] As a result of this reversal of the Fall the women, and in particular Eve, are made apostles.

On the basis of a comparison of this text with the *First* and *Second Apocalypse of James* Cerrato suggests that Hippolytus here refutes certain gnostic doctrines. The redemption of womankind is a core concern in the *First Apocalypse of James* (chap. 24; Hartenstein 2000: 191), and is surprising to James (chap. 38) because of the low view of women expressed in the document (chap. 34–35). Such redemption occurs by ascending to the 'imperishable' and attaining 'manhood' (V.3.41; Funk 1991: 325). Conversely, while the idea of ascending and attaining imperishability is present also in the commentary of Hippolytus, Eve is saved through a return to the pre-fallen state; through union with Christ, rather than by becoming male (Cerrato 2002: 195). Moreover, unlike the Christ of the *Second Apocalypse of James*, who "walked about naked" (NHC V.4.46; Funk 1991: 334), the Christ of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* is emphatically not naked, even though the grave-cloths remained in the tomb (25.5).[15]

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[14] So the translation of Cerrato, who interprets "munus" in the sense of "service," hence "office." The Latin translation of Garitte reads "in-ordinatione ambulantem, accipe et cognosce hoc munus quod (est) praebitum Patri," a footnote interpreting "munus" as "donum," "gift" (1965: 2.47 and n. 35). The German translation of Bonwetsch reads, "die reiche durch Gesetzerfüllung, nimm sie auf und erkenne diese Darbringung, welche vorgelegt ist dem Vater" (1902: 66). Bonwetsch's translation is based on Marr's Russian translation of the Georgian text. I cannot judge whether "die reiche durch Gesetzerfüllung" represents a legitimate alternative interpretation of the Georgian rendered by Garitte as "in-ordinationem ambulantem" or rather results from multiple translation (Georgian to Russian to German).

Given the complexity of multiple translation, caution is in order. It will be recalled that the Hippolytan commentary is originally Greek, but preserved only in Georgian, itself a translation of an Armenian version (see 4.1), here translated by Garritte into Latin. If, however, the Greek word χάρις lies at the base of "munus," then the double association with both gift and gifting for ministry is by no means unwarranted, including whatever sense of 'office' and 'ordination' can legitimately be associated with ministry in the late second or early third century. The suggestion of Eve 'in office' and 'ordained' is furthermore consistent with what is said of Martha and Mary and Eve as 'apostles' and specifically with the argument that women can be made apostles of Christ in 25.6. Indeed, such an interpretation of Eve as office-bearer is in line with the force of the argument, which leads precisely to this end (see further below). Either way, and in both Georgian and Slavonic versions (the only versions in which the extended discussion of Eve is extant), the point is that the fallen state of Eve is reversed and Christ is called to receive her.

4.2.3 *The women as apostles*

> 25.6. And after this, through these women the synagogue, crying out, may make its confession. Those who were made apostles to the apostles, having been sent by Christ, show to us a good witness; to whom first the angels said: 'Go and announce to the disciples: "He has gone before you into Galilee. There you shall see him."' That, therefore, the apostles might not doubt that they (i.e. the women) were sent by the angels, Christ himself met [with] the apostles, that the women might be [recognized as] the apostles of Christ and might fulfil through obedience the failure of the old Eve. Hereafter, listening with obedience, she appears as perfected. (Cerrato 2002: 191)

The first phrase is difficult to interpret and differs in the three extant versions (Georgian, Armenian and Slavonic—the Greek paraphrase omits the entire section, including the extended discourse on Eve). Cerrato uses the Georgian text, which however makes little obvious sense. Given Garitte's observation noted earlier, that the Georgian translator at times translates word for word, blindly copying the Armenian model (1965: 2.II), the Armenian fragment may preserve the more original version. It reads,

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[15] A similar idea recurs in Severian of Gabala who emphasises that after the resurrection Christ is unclothed, but not naked, returning to the primordial state of Adam before the fall. Therein lies, for Severian, the significance of the clothes that are left behind in the tomb,

> that it might be shown, that after the resurrection of Christ, the old form (σχῆμα) of Adam is preserved (ἀποσώζεται) in him and that he became without clothes, not naked but clothed. (*de Creatione Mundi* 5.9; PG 56.483)

What makes this reference intriguing is that here, too, Martha appears at the tomb of Jesus (see further pp. 167–168).

> and after this she calls again a confession to the synagogue by these women, the good testimony, that apostles to the apostles (they are) sent by Christ, to whom first the angels said…[16]

Thus it is not the case that the synagogue makes a confession. Such a development, while possible, would be surprising in view of the previous misunderstandings by the synagogue and Hippolytus' subsequent (and final) judgment that "he pacifies the synagogue and the church is glorified" (25.10 Georgian), which, it will be recalled, appears to have the sense of being subdued, silenced. If the synagogue were here the one confessing through the women, why should she subsequently appear 'pacified,' 'subdued,' without further comment? Far more plausible is the Armenian version which has the confession made *to* rather than *by* the synagogue. The synagogue searched with the women, but, as earlier in the *Commentary* did not find Christ, or his own, and finally is silenced by the confession called out to her by the church through the women, a confession by which the church is 'glorified' and the synagogue 'pacified.'

This appears to be the first extant witness which explicitly calls the women at the Easter tomb "apostles to the apostles" (so Haskins 1993: 65; Cerrato 2001: 294).[17] Significantly the designation refers not to Mary Magdalene, though the text has been (mis-)read that way (Haskins 1993: 90; Eisen 1996: 57; cf. Cerrato 2001). The two apostles to the apostles are Martha and Mary; at no point is Mary explicitly identified as the Magdalene (so also Cerrato 2002: 199). Whether a sound case can be made for identifying the Mary of the *Commentary* with Mary Magdalene on the basis of canonical parallels and allusions is another matter (compare p. 99 n. 6). Such an identification ought not to be assumed *a priori* however.

The commission to "go and announce to the disciples: 'He has gone before you into Galilee. There you shall see him'" closely matches Matthew 28:7 (cf. Mk 16:7). Hippolytus adds a surprising note of explanation, however. Matthew does not record the women's announcement to the disciples, nor their response to it; Luke and the longer ending of Mark add a note of disbelief (Lk 24:9–11; Mk 16:9–11). The *Epistula Apostolorum* places even less emphasis on the announcement of the women. In none of these cases is the announcement of the women the foundation for the faith of the apostles: in all cases it is their own experience of the risen Christ which serves to bring them to faith (Mk 16:14–20; Lk 24:34–53; *Ep. Ap.* 11.2–12.2). Conversely, in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* the apostles appear "as an anonymous group, indeed, as an unbelieving anonymous group" (Cerrato 2001: 297). Furthermore, Hippolytus interprets the appearance of the risen Christ to the apostles not as a means of bringing them to faith independent of the testimony of the women, but merely as Christ's confirmation of the new status of Martha and Mary in the community:

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[16] "Nunc, his factis, clamat rursus confessionem, ad synagogam innuens per mulieres has bonum testimonium, quae apostolic ex apostolis a Christo missae (errant), de quo (*litt.* in quo) prius angelus loquitur" (Garitte 1965: 2.47). This construction aligns more closely also with the Old Slavonic, which reads, "and after this she calls again by these women as good witnesses, and they became apostles to the apostles sent by Christ, to whom first the angels said…" (German in Bonwetsch 1902: 67).

[17] One other early reference to women as apostles is Origen's *Commentary on John* 4.26–28, in which the woman at the well (Jn 4) is called an apostle.

> That, therefore, the apostles might not doubt that they (i.e. the women) were sent by the angels, Christ himself met [with] the apostles, that the women might be [recognized as] the apostles of Christ and might fulfil through obedience the failure of the old Eve. (25.6)[18]

This statement needs to be heard in the context of the debates over the participation of women in church leadership in Asia Minor in the second and third century, specifically in the context of the New Prophecy (so Cerrato 2002). Epiphanius reports that the Montanists grant "grace to Eve because she first ate of the tree of knowledge" (*Pan.* 49.2; Heine 1989a: 133). But, continues Epiphanius,

> even if women among them are appointed to the office of bishop and presbyter because of Eve, they hear the Lord saying, 'Your resort shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you.' (*Pan.* 49.3; ibid.: 135)

The parallels of this report with Hippolytus' commentary are striking:

> 25.7 O new consolations! Eve has been made an apostle. Behold, from this point on the fraudulence of the serpent has been understood, and Eve no longer strays. For the one she has seen, she has hated from that time, and has reckoned him an enemy, who had seduced her through concupiscence. Hereafter the tree of seduction shall no longer seduce her. Behold, from now on she has become happy through life through the tree, and through confession has tasted of the tree through Christ. She has been made worthy for the good and has desired the food. 8. Hereafter she shall no longer hunger, nor shall she offer corruptible food to men. She has received incorruptibility; she is united from now and helper, for Adam

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[18] A similar antithesis between the women at the tomb and Eve is seen in Gregory of Nyssa, *Or.*II (Eisen 1996: 57–58; see also Synek 1994: 42–43).

> leads Eve. O good helper, who has taken good news to [her] husband! Because of this the women announced the good news to the disciples. 9. And because of this they (i.e. the disciples) reckoned them as deceived, because they doubted. There was a reason for this, however, for it was the custom of Eve to report deception and not truth. What is this new announcement of the resurrection, O women? And because of this they reckoned them as deceived. That they might not appear as deceivers, but as speaking the truth, Christ at that time was made manifest to them (i.e. the disciples) and said to them: 'Peace be with you', by this teaching that: 'I who have appeared to these women, also have wished to send apostles to you.' (Cerrato 2002: 192; translation of 25.7–8 mine)

Eve is no longer the deceiver but now the true helper of Adam. The apostles who did not believe the women's testimony—for it is the custom of women (Eve) 'to report deception and not truth'—are told that women can now be recognised as speaking the truth. The strongest statement of all, placed into the mouth of the risen Christ himself, is his intent to send the women as apostles.[19]

Given these similarities with later reports of Montanist arguments, Cerrato has raised the question whether this text of Hippolytus represents

> an example of early Montanist preaching on the Song,... an early catholic source exhibiting a high view of the role and status of women in the community of faith;... [or a text which] is catholic, but not at all related to the Montanist defence of women's ordination. (1997: 271)

He favours the second option, since there is little else in the commentary to support a Montanist theology. Stewart-Sykes has noted an anti-prophetic bias specifically against women prophets in Hippolytus' homily 3 on the Psalms which he identifies as anti-Montanist (1998: 55; on this homily see Nautin 1953: 102–107). This too would suggest that the author of the commentary is not a Montanist and that the commentary predates the development of the Montanist argument for the ordination of women. Cerrato proposes "that the Montanists of the fourth century used this Hippolytan text, or other earlier sources like it, to develop their Eve ordination argument" (1997: 271).

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[19] The political implications of this were not lost on the translators. The Armenian version is the strongest:

> But that they should not again be seen as straying, but as ones speaking the truth, Christ appears to them in their place and says, 'Peace be with you!' Whereby he revealed this as true: 'When I appeared to the women, to send them to you, I wanted to send them as apostles.' (cf. Garitte 1965: 2.49)

Similarly the Old Slavonic has the women sent "as apostles" (Bonwetsch 1902: 70). Conversely the Georgian version is more ambiguous: "et ad vos apostolos mittere volui" is translated by Bonwetsch as "Ich... wollte sie zu euch senden, zu den Aposteln" ("I wanted to send them to you, to the apostles").

While Martha's role as bearer of the good news of the resurrection attracted little attention in the *Epistula Apostolorum* and did not appear to accord her status as an apostolic witness, such status is undeniable here. Hippolytus is emphatic that the role of Martha and Mary as witnesses of the resurrection and 'apostles to the apostles' has implications for their status in the community and for the status of women in the church in general. 'Apostles to the apostles' notably is here not used in a limiting sense, to designate some kind of lesser apostles whose commission is limited to bearing the good news to the male disciples—quite to the contrary. For here the appearance of Christ to the men is explicitly to confirm the apostolic status of the women.

4.3 Origins of the narrative

Given that the commentary originated as an Easter sermon, Cerrato suggests that the insertion of Martha reflects a tradition known to the audience, and that this text provides evidence for a non-canonical tradition flourishing in the second century, which placed Martha and Mary (the latter perhaps already conflated with Mary Magdalene) at the tomb (2001: 296; 2002: 197). This is a possibility which has already been raised in relation to the *Epistula Apostolorum*. Two other possibilities need to be considered: First, that the version of a canonical text known to Hippolytus names Martha and Mary in the Easter narrative, and second, that in inserting Martha into the narrative Hippolytus is proceeding with the same analogical and exegetical method which allowed him to insert a second woman into the image of the Song of Songs. In other words, Martha might appear here not because she is known to belong in the Easter narrative, but because of her symbolic value, perhaps precisely as symbol of the synagogue.

Hippolytus refers explicitly to the four canonical Gospels (8.4–6), which would suggest that his Easter narrative derives from one of these four Gospels, rather than from some other non-canonical source (see also Bonwetsch 1897: 42–43). This, of course, is not to imply that the shape of these Gospels as known to Hippolytus is identical to the shape in which they now stand. The limited textual evidence from the second century, the variability seen in extant manuscripts and the significance of oral tradition should warn against naïvely assuming that when Hippolytus is citing Gospel narratives, he is citing written texts, much less that this text looked like the modern version born out of decades of text criticism. Furthermore, even when he 'quotes' the text, Hippolytus does not do so in any modern sense of the word. For example, Hippolytus claims that "the writings of the gospel say, 'The women went by night to seek [him] in the tomb'" (24.3). The Georgian version (in Garritte's Latin translation) reads "dicunt scripta evangelii," the Armenian "sicut dicit in libro evangelii." Clearly a written text is quoted. Yet the quote does not resemble any modern canonical version. Rather, the 'quote' seems to be a fusion of Song of Songs 3:1, Luke 24:1–2 and Matthew 28:1. From the Song of Songs is taken the time ("at night I sought him whom my soul loves") and from Luke or Matthew are taken "the women" and "the tomb." The more generic designation "the women" resembles Luke 24:1–2, but the number of women reflects Matthew 28:1. Given this flexibility with which Hippolytus exegetes the text in order to allow the image of the Song of Songs to illuminate the Easter narrative, the naming of Martha does not require us to suppose that Hippolytus is working with a text which actually names Martha among the women going to the tomb.

What of the second possibility: Do Martha and Mary hold a symbolic value for Hippolytus connected specifically to the Eve-church or synagogue-church typology? This too is unlikely. The characterisation of Martha and Mary is positive throughout the commentary, while the synagogue is frequently characterised in negative terms. Second, a fragment of the *Commentary on Exodus* attributed to Hippolytus names Mary and Martha as those who announce the resurrection without any connection to the synagogue.

> 'Man ate the bread of angels.' Now learn: to which angels did he give bread, O man? Do the angels eat in heaven? No. Is food ever prepared for them? No. What then is the bread of angels that he gave them? Learn: the angels ministered to the utterance of the Father when the Word came down; the angels gave the tidings to the shepherds as they were keeping their watches; the angels ministered to the commands of the Word: Gabriel to the Virgin, the same (angel) to Zechariah; the angels to both Mary and Martha gave the news that the Bread had been sent from the Resurrection. This sort of 'bread of angels' has the Father effected: it was contained in the Virgin, was to be found in the crib, was glorified in the temple, was witnessed by the star, was worshipped by the magi, was manifested by John, was given by the Father. Recognize this Bread when you take it, O faithful, as the heavenly [bread]. (Brock 1981: 199)[20]

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[20] This fragment survives in a Syriac manuscript dated to the sixteenth or seventeenth

Finally, it has already been noted that Hippolytus is unique in making the connection between Eve and Martha; and while the typology of Martha as synagogue is known from later patristic writers (see 7.5.7), this commentary would be the earliest extant witness to such a typology. More importantly, the analogy between the woman of the Song of Songs, the women of the Easter narrative and the synagogue functions on the basis of the common search for the lover. Yet Martha and Mary exhibit this common characteristic of searching for the beloved only in the context of the Easter narrative. In other words they are the 'searching women' *because* they have been inserted into this narrative; they have not been inserted into the narrative because they are searching women. By contrast, the typology Martha-synagogue elsewhere is drawn on the basis of Martha's distraction with earthly matters (an interpretation of Lk 10:40–41 and Jn 12:2) and her 'little faith' (on the basis of Jn 11:39).[21] In no instance is the typology based either on her presence at a tomb (be it the tomb of Jesus or of Lazarus) or on 'searching' and in all cases the typology functions by comparison with Mary.

Hence it is not the case that Hippolytus inserts Martha into the narrative in order to create a typology with the synagogue or with Eve; nor is it likely that Hippolytus had a version of a canonical Gospel which named Martha in the Easter narrative. And yet he includes Martha, even though this complicates the typological interpretation linking the woman of the Song with Eve, the synagogue and the woman/women at the tomb; and despite the fact that he is aware of the four canonical Gospels which offer a number of other women which he might choose. Cerrato is certainly correct in his judgment that this suggests a tradition known to the audience (2001: 296). It is no doubt also valid to call it a local tradition, particularly given its appearance in a text that has been assigned to Asia Minor, to the same region from which the *Epistula Apostolorum* most likely also derives. Clearly in this instance it is an important local tradition, significant enough to be chosen in preference to traditions from the four Gospels known

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century. While Brock doubts the attribution to Hippolytus on linguistic grounds (1981: 189 n. 28), he notes that one of the terms which are not known from the authentic Hippolytan corpus is "characteristic of early Christian writers from Asia" (197 n. 50), which would fit for the author of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.

[21] See Origen, *Fragments in Luke* 172 (72 in Crouzel, Fournier, and Périchon 1962); *Scholia in Lucam* (PG 17.353); Chrysostom, *On Martha, Mary and Lazarus* (PG 61.701); Ammonius, *Fragmenta in Joannem* (Reuss 1966: 399).

to Hippolytus. It is also noteworthy that this tradition appears here in a sermon, a text that belongs in the liturgy; and specifically a sermon preached at Easter. This raises the possibility that the reason for the insertion of Martha and Mary is to be sought in the liturgy. In other words, it could be that Hippolytus includes Martha and Mary because they belong here in the liturgy and worship life of his community; that Martha and Mary belong into the liturgical celebrations of Easter and are named here for that reason. These are, of course, not mutually exclusive reasons. Rather, a significant local tradition is most likely carried and expressed in the worship life of the local communities. It is worth drawing attention to this liturgical context, however, not only because it matches the proposed original context of the commentary of Hippolytus, but because, as will become apparent, such a liturgical *Sitz* for the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore would not be unique to the Hippolytan commentary.

4.4 Martha as anointing woman

The *Commentary on the Song of Songs* includes another curious reference to Martha. Early in the commentary Hippolytus comments extensively on Song of Songs 1:3, “your name is perfume poured out,” drawing an analogy between the perfume and the word (that is, Christ) which is poured out into the world (2.5–7). A survey of key figures of the Old Testament narratives reveals the righteous yearning for this nard, while the unrighteous dishonoured it by their behaviour (2.10–28). This typology easily recalls the Gospel narratives of the anointing and Hippolytus invites the hearers to bring a vessel to receive this nard, not so as to sell it for three hundred pieces of silver, as Judas had counseled, but rather to be anointed with it freely (2.9).

> 2.29 O new mysteries and truly righteous ones to whom it appeared! Lovingly Martha carried this nard, with which she sprinkled Christ with prayers and consolations. 30 This nard Judas hated, and for thirty pieces of silver he sold Christ. Of it [the nard] he cried out, saying, ‘Why was this nard poured out? It was worth three hundred denarii. (cf. Garitte 1965: 2.29)

With the naming of Judas the narrative resembles the Johannine account of the anointing (Jn 12:1–8). It is curious, however, that Hippolytus names Martha, not Mary, as the woman who anointed Jesus. None of the extant Gospel manuscripts include such a variant. Nor did the many church fathers who fused (or confused) Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalene ever confuse Mary with Martha (Cerrato 2002: 177–179). While the text appears only in the Georgian version, it would seem to be a strange error for a later translator or copyist to make. Indeed a survey of women's names in Gospel manuscripts suggests that, while copyists frequently varied in their spelling of names, they did not substitute completely different names. Hence Martha is more likely original than the error of a copyist. Is it possible that Hippolytus believed this to be the correct reading of John 12:3? Or is it to be taken as further evidence that Martha was the leading figure for Hippolytus—that he substituted the name, either intentionally or accidentally, much as modern exegetes at times read Mary Magdalene into texts in which she does not appear? Is it evidence of the continuing circulation of oral traditions and oral variants of the story?

The fact that the narrative of the anointing appears in all canonical Gospels, but with significant variations, renders it plausible that further variants existed alongside the versions preserved in the canonical texts and that further variants were created every time the written text was read and thereby re-entered oral tradition (see Kelber 1983; Achtemeier 1990; Andersen 1991; Aune 1991; Cartlidge 1990; Hearon 2004a). I am not aware of any other reference to Martha as the anointing woman. The uniqueness of the text does not, of course, diminish its significance. Indeed, the value of this reference in the commentary of Hippolytus might lie precisely in its connection to oral performance (in a sermon) and consequently in revealing, possibly, some of the interactions between written and oral tradition or between written tradition and oral performance of that tradition. Whatever the reason, Martha here appears as the woman who anointed Jesus, who "sprinkled Christ with prayers and consolations."

4.5 Conclusions

The *Commentary on the Song of Songs* reveals an early tradition identifying Martha and Mary as the women at the tomb and first apostles of the resurrection. The naming of Martha is neither accidental nor erroneous, nor is there any indication that the Mary associated with her is to be identified with Mary Magdalene. It is possible, of course, that Hippolytus was "one of the earliest extant writers to conflate Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalene" (Cerrato 2001: 295); nevertheless the fact remains that the title ‘apostle to the apostles’ was applied first to Martha and Mary and that Martha takes the leading role in the commentary. She is consistently named first. This would be surprising indeed, if Martha gained her place in this text as a consequence of being associated with the Magdalene. Since the commentary originated as a sermon preached at Easter I have suggested that the reason for the inclusion of Martha might be sought in the liturgical life of the community. This possibility is strengthened by other liturgical texts which similarly name Martha among the myrrhophores. These are examined next.

CHAPTER FIVE

SINGING A NEW SONG: MARTHA IN LITURGY AND HYMNODY

The previous chapter suggested that the reason for Martha's inclusion in Hippolytus' *Commentary on the Song of Songs* might be that she had found a place in the liturgical life of the church, in particular in connection with the celebration of Easter. Several other liturgical texts support such a *Sitz im Leben* for the tradition of Martha at the tomb of Jesus, including the Ambrosian Missal, Syrian Catholic Fenqitho and an Easter hymn.

5.1 The Ambrosian Missal

The Ambrosian Missal from Milan contains a transitory in the Mass of Friday of the week after Easter which reads

> Maria et Martha dum venirent ad monumentum, Angeli splendentes paruerunt dicentes: Quem quaeritis? Viventem inter mortuos? Non est hic! Venite, videte locum ubi iacuit. Cite euntes dicite discipulis eius, quia surrexit Dominus. Hallelujah. (*Missale Ambrosianum* 1902: 205)
>
> When Mary and Martha came to the tomb, angels appeared in splendour and said to them: Whom do you seek? The living among the dead? He is not here! Come, see the place where he lay. Go and tell the disciples that the Lord is risen. Hallelujah.

This transitory appears also on the feast day of Martha, July 29. It is the only Western text of which I am aware that places Martha at the tomb of Jesus. The transitory is an anthem sung at the Eucharist. Atchley suggests that while it is frequently connected with the liturgical Gospel, a large number are not taken from canonical texts and "some appear to be derived from the Greek" (1909: xxiv).

Dating the text is difficult due to the uncertainties that surround the origins of the Milanese liturgy in general. The origins of the Milanese church and its liturgy are unknown, though there are clear links with Eastern churches, and the church in Jerusalem in particular (Alzati

1999: 16–17).[1] The earliest extant manuscripts of the missal all date to the tenth and eleventh centuries (Lejai 1924: 1375–1376). Lejai suggests that, while the liturgy has remained relatively stable from this time, there were significant changes prior to the ninth century and that "l'état primitif ne peut être ressaisi que par les débris qu'il a laissé çà et là." ("the original form cannot be recovered except in the debris which has been left here and there"; 1924: 1378).

Can anything be said, then, about the age of this particular transitory in the missal? Baumstark (1958: 15–19) suggests liturgical traditions tend to move from diversity to uniformity. On this principle the inclusion of Martha among the myrrhophores is more likely the vestige of earlier diversity than a later insertion. As a later insertion, the name Martha is hard to explain given both the rarity of the tradition in western texts and its non-canonical nature. At the same time Baumstark observes "local peculiarities which give the impression of a retrograde movement" (1958: 18). It is also possible, therefore, that this unusual transitory represents a 'local peculiarity' which could have been included at any stage in the development of the missal.[2]

The inclusion of Martha in the Missal might be explained as the result of links between Ambrose and the works of Hippolytus, including the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. That Ambrose was familiar with this work is evident from his *Treatise on Isaac and the Soul* which is clearly based on the Hippolytan commentary and makes the same connection between the Easter narrative, Song of Songs 3 and Eve (*On Isaac* 42–43; Schmidt [1919] 1967: 235; Atwood 1993: 156). The transitory from the Ambrosian Missal recalls Hippolytus' *Commentary on the Song of Songs* not only in the inclusion of Martha at the tomb, but also in the choice of two women at the tomb (as in Mtt 28:1), several angels (unlike Mtt 28:2–7, but matching Lk 24:4–7), and the form of the question of the angel, "Quem quaeritis?"—"whom do you seek?" which matches the

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[1] The connections with the eastern churches derive in part from the bishops who held this see: among the ten predecessors of Ambrose in the list of bishops of Milan, seven have Greek names, including Auxentius, the Arian predecessor of Ambrose, who held the bishopric from 355–374 CE and was a Cappadocian by birth. Lejai (1924: 1379–1380) lists a number of other sources for this influence, such as the lengthy stays of bishops in Milan while visiting the court or attending synods or on exile, pilgrimages undertaken to the holy land and 'barbarian' invasions.

[2] It should also be noted that Baumstark's schema of liturgical development has been criticised as too hypothetical, utopian and essentially developmental rather than historical (West 1995).

Commentary on the Song ("you seek whom?" 24.4) rather than any of the canonical texts (cf. Mtt 28:5; Mk 16:6; Lk 24:5; Jn 20:13).

Baumstark (1914: 332–333) notes these similarities, but nevertheless disputes the connection between the Missal and the *Commentary on the Song*, since Martha does not appear in the section of *On Isaac* in which Ambrose uses the *Commentary* of Hippolytus and since *On Isaac* speaks of only one angel, rather than several angels/watchmen (as in the *Commentary on the Song*). But these differences might prove nothing more than that the *Commentary* has been incorporated differently in the two texts—and a number of factors can be hypothesised to explain this discrepancy, for example the different literary context, authorship at a different time or by a different person. What the use of the *Commentary* by Ambrose's *On Isaac* does show is that the *Commentary on the Song* was known in Milan at the time of Ambrose. This in itself seems to provide sufficient grounds for assuming that the Martha tradition could have found its way into the Ambrosian Missal via the *Commentary on the Song*. Baumstark's alternative hypothesis, that both Hippolytus' *Commentary on the Song* and the Ambrosian Missal derive from a single extra-canonical Gospel source (such as the *Gospel of the Egyptians*) appears unnecessarily complicated in including a third hypothetical text and implausible given the liturgical context. By the fourth century a commentary by a respected ('orthodox') church father appears a more likely source for liturgical texts than a non-canonical Gospel.

A second possibility for the inclusion of Martha lies in the links between Milan and the church in Jerusalem which Alzati observes. There is evidence that the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore was known and celebrated in Jerusalem. This proposal and the substantiating evidence will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. If, as Alzati asserts, "many aspects of the Jerusalem pattern of worship were taken up in Milan and adapted in various ways" (1999: 16), then the tradition of Martha at the tomb might represent one more feature of Jerusalem worship taken up in Milan.

5.2 The Syrian Catholic Fenqitho

The Syrian Catholic Fenqitho is a festal breviary, a collection of liturgical texts for feast days, to be sung by the choir (Clemens 1886–1896; see also Baumstark 1910: 28–29; Madey 1975: 226; Bradshaw 2002b: 474–475). In the Vespers service (*Ramsho*) on the Monday of White

Week (the week after Easter) it includes the proper, "On the Sunday Martha and Mary went to the tomb of the Son, one carrying oil for his body, the other carrying spices" (Clemens 1886–1896: 5.358).[3]

According to Baumstark (1910: 29–30), the Fenqitho represents the final result of the fusion of several older collections of such texts which occurred around the turn of the first millennium CE, but whose oldest parts Baumstark dates to the fourth to sixth or seventh century CE. It includes, for example, the *octoechos* of Severus, a collection of hymns associated with the sixth-century patriarch Severus. Baumstark (1910: 63–66) also observes a significant expansion of Syriac hymns between the sixth and ninth centuries, whose development cannot, however, be determined with certainty. Furthermore, there is continuing contact with Greek liturgy and Greek texts which entered into the Syriac breviary over centuries (1910: 94). Thus he concludes that the provenance of the Fenqitho must remain uncertain and any attempts to determine a more precise dating and provenance given up ("Sein genaueres Alter oder seine Heimat bestimmen zu wollen, muß man mangels jeder zuverlässigen Grundlage für einen solchen Versuch unterlassen"; 1910: 67).

There are indicators that suggest the naming of Martha might derive from an early stratum of the Fenqitho. First, she is named as myrrhophore also in a marginal illumination in *Syr.33*, a Syriac Gospel manuscript dated to the sixth century. This image will be discussed in some detail in the next chapter; suffice it to note here that it attests the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore in Syria in the sixth century. Second, Martha appears among a group of women disciples in the *Testamentum Domini*, an ancient church order which has been dated to the fourth or fifth century and is usually assigned to Syria, though Asia Minor or Egypt have also been suggested (Sperry-White 1991: 6; Bradshaw 2002a: 97; see 9.3.2 below). Significantly the *Testamentum Domini* appears as the first document in the West-Syrian *Synodicon*, thus taking pride of place among West Syrian church polity documents (Vööbus 1975–76). The *Testamentum* opens with an apocalyptic discourse in which the risen Jesus discusses the signs of the end of the age with the disciples. Alongside the apostles are named "Martha, Mary and Salome" as "those who were with us" (Vööbus 1975–76: 1.32). Salome is known only from the resurrection narratives (Mk 15:40; 16:1), and the context in the *Testamentum* likewise suggests a resurrection dialogue. Thus, while not naming Martha as myrrhophore, the *Testamentum Domini* is consistent with such a tradition and the appearance of Martha in this context more readily explicable in light of this tradition.

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[3] I am indebted to Sebastian Brock for drawing my attention to this text and for providing a translation.

Finally, it is worth noting the links between Syrian and hagiopolite liturgical traditions. The West Syrian liturgical tradition belongs to the Antiochene family of liturgies and received the Antiochene anaphora in its fifth-century form (Varghese 2004: 1; see also Day 1972: 4–5, 153). The Antiochene church in turn had adopted the anaphora of St James as it was celebrated in Jerusalem. It has already been noted that there are indicators that the tradition of Martha at the tomb of Jesus was known in Jerusalem. Baumstark observes influences from Jerusalem to Syria both in art and in particular in liturgy, including in the Vespers service (1908: 29–30; 1910: 95–96, 119–120; this close connection of Syria to Jerusalem is noted also by Siman 1971: 19). These contacts can be seen already in the fourth-century diary of Egeria which records that the hagiopolite Easter liturgy was celebrated in Greek but translated into Syriac "so that the people understand" (47.3–4; Wilkinson 1981: 146). It is therefore possible that this Syriac tradition of Martha as myrrhophore is linked to, or derives from, such a tradition in Jerusalem. Also noteworthy is the consistency with which this tradition appears within liturgical contexts: as in the case of the Ambrosian Missal, Martha the myrrhophore is here remembered in the week after Easter.

5.3 An Easter hymn

Martha also appears in a Greek hymn which has been preserved in its entirety on a wooden tablet in Cologne and partially in an unpublished manuscript at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris (MS Copte 129^{20}) where it forms part of a collection of hymns for Easter (Römer 1982). Römer notes that the hymn must have been popular, for its first *troparion* (stanza) also served as the *heirmos* (the model stanza) for the eighth Ode of a *Kanon Anastasimos* and is preserved as such in two places in the *Hirmologion*, the book which preserves such model *troparia* (Eustratiades 1932: 97, 119).[4] While the first *troparion* of this hymn has consequently been known, the complete hymn has only been published and analysed more recently (Römer 1982).

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[4] The *kanon* is a cycle of hymns composed of nine odes, each of which is associated with a biblical canticle. Each *ode* consists of an initial *heirmos* followed by a number

The provenance of the wooden tablet on which the hymn is inscribed is unknown. There are a number of indices which suggest that the scribes (four different hands have been discerned) spoke Coptic and were less familiar with Greek (Römer 1982: 59–61). Römer further suggests that the palaeography of the second and fourth hand dates it to the seventh century. The relevant sections of the Parisian manuscript (Copte 129^{20}) can be palaeographically dated to the seventh to ninth centuries.[5] The hymn itself certainly dates from an earlier time. Römer notes that its form and metre correspond closely to another early Christian hymn for Palm Sunday published by Pitra (1966: 1.476–477) which has been identified as a precursor to the *kontakion* (Grosdidier de Matons 1977: 63–80).

The *kontakion* is "a sung metrical sermon" (Petersen 1985: 172; see also Schork 1973) that usually paraphrases a biblical narrative. Indeed, its origins may lie not so much in the homily, but in the reading of the Gospels (so Grosdidier de Matons 1980–81: 33). It is associated particularly with the sixth-century Romanus Melodus, who has been credited with being its inventor (but see Mitsakis 1971: 46–48). Petersen observes that

> the *kontakion* introduced a new vibrancy into ecclesiastical poetry. This was achieved by the use of dialogue between characters in the story. These characters were given a hitherto unknown psychological depth. By heightening the drama of the situation depicted, the hymns took on a new immediacy for the listener. (1985: 172)

A similar quality can be observed in the Easter hymn. It reveals close affinity to the *kontakion* in its metre, its use of a set refrain and its incorporation of an acrostic, which, however, is not yet set at the beginning of each stanza, as in the *kontakion*, but weaves through the stanzas. Moreover the hymn lacks the introductory verse (κουκούλιον) seen in later *kontakia*. These qualities of the Easter hymn, which it shares with the Palm Sunday hymn, suggest that it is earlier than the

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of *troparia* which follow the metre (and melody) of the relevant *heirmos*. The *kanon* developed in the seventh century and replaced the earlier *kontakion*.

[5] The codex collates parts from a number of manuscripts of varying ages (Römer 1982: 62–63; see also Baumstark 1927b).

sixth century, but given its close affinity with the *kontakion*, probably not by much (Römer 1982: 76).[6]

The text of the hymn and a German translation have been published by Römer (1982). For ease of reference, and since substantial portions of this text will require careful exegesis, both the Greek text and an English translation are provided here.

1a Ἆισμα καινὸν ᾄσωμεν, λαοί,
b τῷ σαρκωθέντι
c ἐκ παρθένου τοῦ σῶσαι ἡμᾶς.
2d Βουλῇ γὰρ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ
e προσηλώθη, τέθνηκε σαρκὶ
3f Γνωρίσαι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν
g ὅτι διὰ τὸν Ἀδαμ
4h Δούλου σχῆμα ἐνεδύσατο
5i ὁ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις οἰκῶν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

6a Ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ τάφῳ ὁ σωτὴρ
b καὶ ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ
c τῷ πατρικῷ ἐκάθητο.
7d Ζωὴν γὰρ ἐν τῇ χειρὶ
e ὁ δεσπότης κρατεῖ βροτῶν.
8f Ἡ κτίσις ἐξίστατο
g βλέπουσα τὸν πλαστουργὸν
9h Θνετὸν κείμενον ἐν τῷ τάφῳ.
10i ὁ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις οἰκῶν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

11a Ἵσταντο κατέναντι τοῦ τάφου
b αἱ περὶ Μάρθαν
c καὶ Μαρίαν κλαίουσαι
12d Κύριον ἐπιζητοῦσαι
e μυρίσαι καθάπερ θνητόν.
13f Λαμπρόστολος ἄγγελος
g ἀνεβόα πρὸς αὐτάς·
14h “Μὴ φοβεῖσθε ὑμεῖς, Ἰησοῦς γὰρ
15i ὁ Χριστὸς ἀνέστη ὁ ζῶν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.”

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[6] Römer’s close comparison of the Easter hymn with the Palm Sunday hymn further suggests that the latter served as a model for the former (1982: 75).

16a Νοῆσαι θελούσαις σαφῶς ὤφθη
b ὁ ἐν τῷ λίθῳ
c πρὸς αὐτὰς φθεγγόμενος—
17d Ξενίσαι τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν
e οὗτος ὁ ἄγγελος
18f Οὐράνιον εἶχεν μορφήν—
g ὡς κατῆλθεν ἐπὶ γῆς
19h Πάντα σῶσαι ἐθέλων κόσμον
20i ὁ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις οἰκῶν εἴς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

21a Ῥήματά μοι λέγουσιν σεμνά·
b σοφισαμένη
c τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἑώρακα
22d Στήκοντα καὶ πρὸς αὐτὰς
e βοῶντα. "θαρσεῖτε ὑμεῖς"
23f Τὸν Ἅιδην ἐσκύλευσεν
g ὁ ἀναστὰς ἐκ νεκρῶν.
24h Ὑποδείξωμεν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις
25i ὅτι βασιλεύει ἀεὶ εἴς τοὺς αἰῶνας."

26a Φαίνεται ταῖς μύρον φερούσαις
b ὁ συνάναρχος
c τῷ πατρὶ καὶ τῷ πνεύματι.
27d Χαρὰν γὰρ ἀντὶ κλαυθμοῦ
e καὶ πένθους παρέσχεν αὐταῖς.
28f Ψυχὰς γάρ ἐφώτισεν
g ......
29h Ὦ θεὸς καὶ δέσποτα…
30i ....
(Römer 1982: 66–67)

Let us sing a new song, people, to the one who became flesh
out of the virgin, to save us.
For by [God's] will he was nailed to the cross. He died in the flesh
to make known to the nations that for the sake of Adam
he took on the form of a servant
who lives in the highest heights eternally.

He lay in the tomb, the saviour, and sat on the father's throne.
For the ruler holds the life of mortals in his hand.
Creation was beside itself, seeing the creator

lying dead in the tomb
who lives in the highest heights eternally.

In front of the tomb stood the [women] with Martha and Mary and wept.
They sought the Lord, to anoint him as a corpse.
An angel in shining gown called to them,
'Fear not! For Jesus
Christ is risen, who lives eternally.'

To the [women] seeking to understand clearly the one on the stone appeared.
To them he proclaims—
their eyes were astonished, such [was] the angel,
having a heavenly form—that he came to the earth
because he wanted to save all the world,
who lives in the highest heights eternally.

Holy words they have said to me; having become wise, I saw Jesus
standing and crying out to them, 'Have courage!'
The one risen from the dead stripped Hades of his arms.
We want to show humans
that he rules always to eternity.

He appears to the myrrh-bearing women, the one who is with the Father
and the Spirit without beginning.
He gave them joy instead of weeping and mourning.
He gave light to souls…
O God and ruler…

5.3.1 *Martha in the Easter hymn*

The recounting of the Easter narrative in the hymn begins at the third stanza. It is instructive to compare the version of the story here with the canonical Gospel narratives. For if the *kontakion* developed out of the reading of the Gospel, then presumably a Gospel served as a model also for this hymn. Moreover, while it was observed in the analysis of the *Epistula Apostolorum* that a non-canonical tradition of Martha at the tomb existed early alongside the canonical traditions, by the fifth century, and within the context of the liturgy, one can expect that it is the canonical accounts, rather than a non-canonical tradition, which served as the primary basis for the hymnody of the churches. Careful comparison reveals that this is indeed the case, that the hymn is based on the Matthean Easter narrative.

A number of parallels between the third stanza of the hymn and the Matthean Easter narrative suggest such dependence. First, the use of τάφος (11a) recalls Matthew 28:1 (cf. 27:64, 66) over against the other canonical Easter narratives, which do not use this term but rather μνημεῖον/μνῆμα (Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1–2; Jn 20:1). Moreover κατέναντι τοῦ τάφου (11a) recalls Matthew 27:61 where the women are said to sit ἀπέναντι τοῦ τάφου (the only Gospel where this preposition occurs).[7] Insofar as the hymn names two women, it likewise parallels Matthew, though in that instance the two women are Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" (ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία, 28:1) and no other women are said to be with them, either at the burial or at the resurrection (27:62–28:1). The other canonical accounts vary in the number of women who are named: only Mary Magdalene is named in John 20:1, whereas three women appear in Mark 16:1 and Lk 24:10. While the number of named women in the hymn thus matches Matthew more closely than the other canonical Gospels, Martha and Mary are set among a larger group of weeping women (αἱ περὶ Μάρθαν καὶ Μαρίαν κλαίουσαι, 11b–c).[8] Only Luke mentions other women besides the three named ones, but uses quite a different construction (καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ σὺν αὐταῖς, 24:10). While Römer considers the αἱ περί formula as evidence of an affinity to the Lukan Gospel (1982: 83), the differences to this Gospel, even in this detail, are thus greater than the similarities.

Unlike any of the canonical accounts, the women in the Easter hymn come explicitly to weep (κλαίουσαι, 11c). In Matthew they come "to see the tomb" (θεωρῆσαι τὸν τάφον, 28:1) while in Mark they intend to anoint the body (ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν, 16:1). The intent to come and weep does occur in the non-canonical *Gospel of Peter* (κλαῦσαι καὶ κόψασθαι, 12.52) and in the *Epistula Apostolorum*, where Martha is likewise named among the women (*Ep. Ap.* 9.5). It is unlikely, however, that any non-canonical account served as a model here. More likely the women's weeping reflects the author's interpretation of the canonical accounts, as well as a desire to contrast the expectations of the women, who intend to anoint and weep over a dead man, with the expectation of the congregation which knows that the *kyrios* is not "as a corpse" (καθάπερ θνητόν, 12e).[9]

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[7] Κατέναντι recurs in Mtt 21:2//Mk 11:2//Lk 19:30; Mk 12:41; 13:3 but never in the context of the burial or resurrection of Jesus.

[8] The Paris manuscript reads Μάρθα καὶ σὺν Μαρία ἔκλαι[ον] (Römer 1982: 66). Six letters are obscured before Μάρθα. Römer (1982: 83) suggests that both variants are possible in terms of the metre of the hymn and that it is uncertain whether αἱ περὶ should be inserted before Martha, which would require converting Martha into the accusative case.

Mourning is closely associated with women, who played a significant role in public mourning (Osiek 1997; Ebersole 2000; Schroer 2002). Such mourning is already indicated in the Matthean account by the notice that the women "sat" opposite the tomb (καθήμεναι, 27:61), for, as Strelan observes, "to sit is to mourn" (1999: 31). Thus the depiction of women weeping at the tomb may reflect not only the author's cultural expectations, but also the author's reading of the Matthean text. It is certainly consistent with the Matthean narrative, though the posture of the women is quite different: they sit in Matthew and stand in the hymn. This different posture could reflect different cultural expectations about the appropriate posture of women in mourning or derive from the liturgical context, in which standing is a more likely and more significant posture.[10]

The hymn's reference to an angel in shining garment (Λαμπρόστολος ἄγγελος, 13f) reflects Matthew 28:2–3. By contrast, Mark refers to a "young man" (νεανίσκος, 16:5), Luke speaks of "two men" (ἄνδρες δύο, 24:4) and John of "two angels" (δύο ἀγγέλους, 20:12), not just one. Moreover, the first part of the speech of the angel (Μὴ φοβεῖσθε ὑμεῖς, 14h) is a direct quotation of Matthew 28:5.[11] The second part picks up the liturgical announcement of Easter: Χριστὸς ἀνέστη (15i).

The third stanza of the Easter hymn thus clearly recounts the Easter narrative of Matthew. The naming of Martha as myrrhophore appears here as an interpretation of Matthew 28:1. It is noteworthy that she is named first. This suggests that Martha has not been co-opted into this role by fusion or confusion of Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalene. Rather, Martha appears in the position in which Mary Magdalene appears in the Gospel. It is not “Mary Magdalene and Martha” who are named here, but “Martha and Mary.” Insofar as there has been a fusion of Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany, this fusion has resulted in the absorption of the Magdalene into Mary of Bethany, rather than the reverse.

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[9] Here, too, there are verbal differences to the Lukan account where one might have expected closer similarities, if Luke were the narrative being recounted. For Luke speaks not of the "corpse" (θνητός) but of the "dead" (νεκρός, 24:5).

[10] It has already been observed that women's mourning also became a matter of critique in some early Christian discourse (see p. 75 n. 10), where it was seen as a sign of lack of faith (Chrysostom *In Joannem Hom.* 62.4; see also Taft 1998: 72–74). This *topos* also may be reflected in the contrast between the women who come to weep and the Lord who is risen. On the other hand Alexiou observes that the church hired professional mourners for the funeral processions at important funerals, "whose work was to give physical manifestation to their grief, to sing psalms and funeral hymns…Their use of hired mourners and breast-beaters makes the denunciations of Chrysostom and Gregory [of Nazianzen] appear somewhat hypocritical" (2002: 29).

[11] Compare Mark 16:6 (Μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε), Luke 24:5 (Τί ζητεῖτε τὸν ζῶντα μετὰ τῶν νεκρῶν;) and John 20:13 (Γύναι, τί κλαίεις;).

The characterisation of the women is also highly noteworthy. They are described in the fourth stanza as Νοῆσαι θελούσαις σαφῶς, “seeking to understand clearly” (16a). This is a much stronger statement about the faith of the women than any found in the canonical Easter narratives. The canonical accounts either end with the fleeing of the women (Mk 16:8) or the coming to faith of the male disciples (Mtt 28:16–20; Lk 24:12–53; Jn 20:16–21:25); indeed in Luke it is explicitly *not* the faith of the women which leads to the faith of the men (24:10–11) while in Matthew and John the faith of the male disciples is likewise gained by virtue of independent appearances of the risen Jesus rather than by virtue of the message of the women (Mtt 28:17; Jn 20:8, 16–31; 21:1–14). Even the Gospel of John, which recounts the encounter of Mary Magdalene with the risen Jesus in some detail and relays her message in direct speech (20:11–18), nevertheless does not count the appearance to her in its enumeration of resurrection appearances “to the disciples” (21:14), indicating either that Mary Magdalene is not considered a disciple, or that the appearance to her does not ‘count’ (Setzer 1997: 268; on the women in the canonical Easter narratives see also Schottroff 1982; O’Collins and Kendall 1987; Heine 1989b; Perkins 1992).

In this hymn, conversely, the women are the ones who seek to understand clearly; and the proclamation of “the one on the stone” (ὁ ἐν τῷ λίθῳ, 16b) appears in response to their desire to understand. There is no mention of any male disciples to whom the message is to be taken—the women themselves are the recipients of the message, not merely the bearers of the message to others.[12] The message which is proclaimed to them is “that he (Jesus) came to the earth wishing to save the whole cosmos” (ὡς κατῆλθεν ἐπὶ γῆς πάντα σῶσαι ἐθέλων κόσμον, 18g–19h). Thus not merely the fact of the resurrection, but the entire message of salvation and its meaning is revealed to the women. Here it is the women, to whom are explained the mysteries, rather than the men (cf. Lk 24:27, 45–48). Whereas the third stanza of the hymn recounted the Matthean Easter narrative, the fourth stanza thus moves beyond it and creates a much more significant role for the women than any found in the canonical Easter narratives.

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[12] By comparison, Crossan speaks of the women in Matthew 28:1–10 receiving “a message vision rather than a mandate vision;…secretarial level rather than executive-level apparition” (1998: 572; see also p. 560). For a critique of this reading, see Schaberg (2002: 251).

Even more unusual is the opening of the fifth stanza: “Holy words they have said to me; having become wise, I saw Jesus standing and crying out to them, ‘Have courage!’” (Ῥήματά μοι λέγουσιν σεμνά· σοφισαμένη τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἑώρακα στήκοντα καὶ πρὸς αὐτὰς βοῶντα. “θαρσεῖτε ὑμεῖς”, 21a–22e). Particular attention needs to be drawn to the verb σοφισαμένη, whose feminine suffix indicates a female speaker. It is a woman who, ‘having become wise,’ sees Jesus. Römer interprets this with reference to one of the women in the text: “σοφισαμένη τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἑώρακα sollen sicherlich die Worte der Maria sein” (1982: 87). Once again Martha, though named in the text, disappears from view, eclipsed by Mary Magdalene. For Römer interprets σοφισαμένη with reference to Mary Magdalene’s failure to recognise Jesus immediately in John 20:15. Her assumption that the choice of σοφίζεσθαι is driven by the narrative in John 20 is questionable, however, given that the Easter narrative of the hymn is based on Matthew, not John, and that the verb σοφίζεσθαι does not appear in the Johannine account. Furthermore, this interpretation is difficult, even for Römer, who is forced to see the first part of that verse (Ῥήματά μοι λέγουσιν σεμνά, 21a) as referring not to the same speaker, but as “Vorankündigung des folgenden Erlebnisberichtes der Maria” (“preannouncement of the subsequent report of Mary”; 1982: 87), for she is at a loss to determine any subject for the plural verb λέγουσιν.

There is a better explanation for the text. Clearly, two women are named in the text (and other women are said to be with them). It is these women who have just been celebrated in the hymn; to these women “seeking to understand clearly (Νοῆσαι θελούσαις σαφῶς) the one on the stone appeared. To them (πρὸς αὐτὰς) he proclaims…” (16a–c). Since there is no change of grammatical subject between 16a–c and 21a, the most obvious referent of λέγουσιν are still the women. It seems to me that Römer merely fails to find a satisfactory answer to her question “Wer sollte mit λέγουσιν gemeint sein?” (“Who should be intended by λέγουσιν?"; 1982: 87), because she approaches the text so firmly from the canonical accounts and specifically from the Johannine version. Since she has read that Mary Magdalene goes alone to the tomb in John's Gospel, she assumes that a single speaker would be required. Yet the hymn consistently speaks of several women—and not of Mary Magdalene, but rather of Martha and Mary and other women with them. It is they who are the subject of λέγουσιν, they who have "said holy words…to me."

Following her line of interpretation, Römer interprets the "me" as a generic reference to "jeder der das Lied singt oder hört" ("everyone who sings or hears the hymn"; 1982: 87). This is unlikely for two reasons. First, because elsewhere in the hymn the singers/hearers are always named using the plural form (1a, c; 24h). Second, Römer needs to insert the hearers because she herself notes that the verses of the song would most likely have been sung by a cantor with the whole congregation joining in the chorus (1982: 85; so also Mitsakis 1971: 38; Schork 1973: 531–532).[13] Yet precisely therein lies a much neater and simpler explanation: the 'me' to whom the holy words have been said is the cantor who is the sole speaker at this point. It is the one who sings the hymn in worship who, "having become wise," announces "I saw Jesus." This in turn makes sense of the subsequent phrase "standing and crying out to them" (Στήκοντα καὶ πρὸς αὐτὰς βοῶντα, 22d–e). For if Mary were indeed the speaker, the one who announces that, having become wise, she saw Jesus, then who are the "them" (αὐτὰς) to whom Jesus cries out "have courage"? The "I" who sees Jesus cannot also be the "them" to whom he cries out—if Mary is among the latter, she is clearly not the former.

The grammar of the hymn thus suggests quite a different sense than the one proposed by Römer. The subject of λέγουσιν are the women at the tomb and the "me" to whom they speak holy words is the cantor who, on the basis of their holy words, becomes wise and is thereby enabled to see Jesus standing and crying out to them "Have courage!". Here the experience of the cantor in worship and the narrative of the women at the tomb is fused in one divine present, so that in effect the cantor enters into the story of the women.[14]

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[13] Antiphonal singing appears to have been a regular part of Christian worship from early on (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.7; Wilson 1998). On hymn singing in early Christianity see also Darre (1993).

This, in turn, has an intriguing consequence, for as was noted earlier, the subject of σοφισαμένη ("having become wise," 21b) is female. Thus it appears that the cantor of the hymn is either female or has assumed a feminine persona at this point. The *kontakia* of Romanus contain a number of examples of a cantor assuming a female persona, dramatising the various Biblical women (cf. hymns 21 and 23, for example). Perhaps the cantor here similarly assumes the persona of one of the women in the story. The construction "I saw Jesus crying out to them" would then require, however, that the cantor has assumed the persona of a woman who is not one of the women at the tomb. In this it differs from the hymns of Romanus where the cantor takes on the role of the key woman protagonist.

Is it possible that the hymn was intended to be sung by a woman? There is some historical evidence that might support such a reading of this text. Jacob of Serug praises Ephrem for his establishment of choirs of women. The 'Daughers of the Covenant' are known to have had a role singing in the congregation's worship (Harvey 2005: 4–6; see also Harvey 2001b). Not only so, but Harvey explains that the depictions of the Daughters of Covenant

> are notable for their emphasis on the instructional role these choirs played in educating the larger Christian community in matters of orthodoxy and heresy. Jacob, in fact, frankly names the women in these choirs *malpanyatha*, teachers. The term Jacob uses is the feminine form of *malpana* (masc. Teacher), one of the most revered titles in Syriac tradition, indicating not only the teaching of the Syriac language, but further, its proper (doctrinal) understanding.... According to the *Vita Ephraemi*,...the Daughters of the Covenant were trained to sing on matters explicating the entire salvation drama, as well as the devotional life of Christians, and about the saints—almost the exact list of topics expressly forbidden for widows to teach about in the Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum*! (2005: 10–11)

A female speaker also appears in an anonymous Syriac verse homily, also of the fifth century (Brock 1986: 98–99; 1989: 147). Brock notes that the evidence is not unambiguous: in this instance the Syriac verb form could be either the normal first person feminine or a rare form of the masculine. Analogous forms occur in two other places in the text, both of which are clearly feminine forms within their contexts. Moreover, the homily grants an unusually prominent place to Sarah, a feature which might be more readily explicable if the speaker were a woman. This Syriac verse homily thus provides a parallel example to the text under consideration here, with the difference that the Greek of the Easter hymn is definite: σοφισαμένη is unambiguously a feminine participle.

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[14] Compare Kartsonis (1998) and Safran (1998) on the way in which icons serve to join the reality of the past with that of the present (see also Taft 1980–81; Walter 1982).

While the evidence for women's singing in worship derives mostly from Syria, there is also limited evidence from Asia Minor. Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch in the late third century, was criticised, among other things, for allowing women to sing hymns to himself on Easter Sunday.

> And as to psalms, he put a stop to those addressed to our Lord Jesus Christ, on the ground that they are modern and the compositions of modern men, but he trains women to sing hymns to himself in the middle of the church on the great day of the Pascha, which would make one shudder to hear. (HE 7.30.10; Burrus 1989: 220)

Quasten (1983: 82) suggests this critique is specifically directed against women singing. Yet Burrus (1989: 224 n. 45) and Harvey (2005: n. 8) rightly observe that it is not the gender of the singers but rather the content of their hymns which is condemned.[15] Striking in this context is that these women are explicitly singing on Easter Sunday, thus in a context which would fit the Easter hymn perfectly. It is also the case, however, that the evidence for Paul's women cantors predates the Easter hymn significantly. The controversies surrounding both Paul of Samosata and the singing of hymns in the fourth century cautions against assuming this text equally reflects the historical context for women's singing also in the fifth century. The evidence from Syria, meanwhile, derives from a different geographic and cultural context and caution is likewise in order in generalising this evidence to a Greek hymn. The evidence of Romanus, conversely, is closer in time and nature. It consequently seems more prudent to assume that the hymn more likely reflects a male cantor assuming a female persona than an actual female cantor.[16] This does not diminish the significance of the female voice embedded in the text. Even if the hymn was performed by a male cantor, it remains significant that he assumes a woman's voice. Either way it is a woman's voice, a woman's perspective, which is embedded in the hymn, not only in the characters within it, but also in the cantor proclaiming the story.

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[15] The singing of hymns was a matter of considerable controversy in the fourth century. Key areas of dispute included "what could be sung (non-Biblical or only Biblical psalms), how the singing was performed (antiphonal, responsorial, or congregational singing), and when it was done (at the eucharist or not)" (Ferguson 1983: 56). The Council of Laodicea (convened before 381 CE) banned the singing of new hymns in church and ruled that only regular singers were authorised to sing from the pulpit (canon 15; see further Mitsakis 1971: 38). On the liturgical singing of women in early Christianity see Quasten (1983: 75–87).

The Easter hymn names Martha and Mary as the women at the tomb, together with other women said to be with them (11b); it lauds these women as the ones seeking to understand clearly, as the recipients of the message of salvation and as the ones who proclaim that message to the cantor and thence to the congregation. It was asked at the outset what the Martha traditions reveal about women's authority and women's participation in ministry and leadership in some of the early churches. This text is unusual in revealing not only Martha in the text, but also a woman's voice proclaiming the text. Harvey observes that

> it was in their sacred rituals that Christians negotiated the terms of their worldly existence, established order and sense to their lives and in their relations with one another. Ritual practices granted each member of the community a necessary place and purpose; they validated each person's contribution as worthy. Such a sacred order challenged the social order as it existed, and made possible other kinds of configurations. Women's voices could proclaim—and indeed embody—such possibilities. Yet the liturgy offered a bounded freedom. In the end it confirmed the world as it was. (2001b: 129–130)

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[16] If the cantor of this hymn is female it might also be considered whether the presence of such a female cantor suggests that the hymn was sung within a female monastic context rather than in a congregational (municipal) setting. The Daughters of the Covenant sing in congregational worship in Syria, though the difficulties of generalising from the Syriac context have already been raised. There is also evidence that some of the strongest opposition to the use of hymns in the fourth and fifth century came from the monasteries. Several anecdotes from Sinai and Egypt suggest that the singing of *troparia* was rejected by the monks as unfitting and as the domain of the churches (Grosdidier de Matons 1980–81: 33–34; see also Mitsakis 1971: 40–41). Perhaps the strongest evidence that speaks against locating the hymn within a female monastic community is its apparent popularity, which was noted at the outset (Römer 1982). The preservation of the hymn in two manuscripts and its inclusion in the *hirmologion* seems unlikely if the hymn had been composed and transmitted solely within female monastic circles. Indeed, precisely the inclusion of the hymns first verse in the *hirmologion* suggests the hymn was known and sung in wider contexts than merely in women's monasteries.

Harvey offers a number of examples of continuity between sacred order and social order, of women who enjoyed civic and social status as a result of their ascetic practices, "including their practice of sacred song" (ibid.: 131). The Easter hymn reflects a similar reversal of the usual state of affairs: a place where women speak and men are silent, where women proclaim and men listen. Here, liturgically, the women are given their place and their voice. Bounded freedom it might be; but a reversal of the usual roles it remains nonetheless. The hymn is significant also as a reading of the canonical texts, a reading in which the women take centre stage and proclaim the message boldly to a community called to believe it, in striking contrast to some of the canonical versions in which the women flee silently (Mk 16:8) or are disbelieved (Lk 24:11).

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

Three texts have been surveyed here which all suggest that the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore had a *Sitz* in the liturgical life of at least some of the churches. In the discussion of the Hippolytan *Commentary on the Song of Songs* the possibility was raised that Hippolytus might have included Martha in the Easter narrative not because he was following a local tradition or a non-canonical Gospel, but due to liturgical considerations; that Martha was part of the liturgical traditions connected with the celebration of Easter. While the Ambrosian Missal from Milan and the Syrian Catholic Fenqitho both derive from a time later than Hippolytus, it is striking not only that they are both liturgical texts, but that both include Martha in the week after Easter. Whatever the origins of the tradition, it seems that it found its *Sitz* in the liturgical life of the Easter celebrations of at least some of the churches. The suggestion that the choice of Martha in Hippolytus might be driven by liturgical concerns is consistent with later evidence and might even indicate that Martha had already found a place there by the time Hippolytus wrote his sermon in the late second or early third century.

The Easter hymn offers further support for a liturgical *Sitz im Leben* of the 'Martha myrrhophore' tradition. It presents a central role for myrrhophores, a much bolder statement on their role as apostolic witnesses, recipients of the message of salvation and preachers of this salvation within the congregation, than any presented in any of the canonical Gospels. This offers food for thought on the interpretation of these texts. It has at times been argued that the canonical empty tomb stories represent 'women's traditions' which were only later incorporated into the mainstream ('malestream') tradition, a process which also resulted in their marginalisation (Osiek 1997; Hearon 2004b). Since such a strong role for the women can appear in a fifth-century hymn, it is clear that such a role for the women need not indicate either a very early stratum of tradition, such as Schüssler Fiorenza's 'egalitarian community' prior to a 'fall from grace' (see particularly Schüssler Fiorenza 1983), or a 'women's community.' For, as has been argued here, there is no compelling reason why the hymn should be assigned to a women's community (see n. 16).

Osiek suggests that "the silence of Paul and of Acts…is indication that the empty tomb tradition is not foundational to the kerygma of the resurrection" (1997: 110) but argues that this is not because resurrection faith is based on appearances rather than on the empty tomb, but rather the converse, that "faith is based on appearances, not the empty tomb, because the empty tomb necessitates reliance on the credibility of women" (1997: 115). The Easter hymn offers a counterpoint to such a view, for it provides one example in which Easter faith is unapologetically based on the credibility of women. There may well have been reluctance to base the proclamation of the resurrection on the testimony of women at some times and in some places—perhaps even at most times and in most places. Nevertheless, it is striking that in this hymn such is patently *not* the case. The proclamation of the kerygma of the resurrection is given to the women alone—the women at the tomb and a 'woman' cantor who hears their 'holy words' and sings them to the congregation. The women are not merely 'apostles to the apostles,' messengers whose commission ends once they have passed the news on to the men. Here they are apostles to the congregation. The popularity of the hymn is surely also significant. In a popular Easter hymn from the fifth century, that was copied (and presumably sung) over several centuries, the women at the tomb—Martha and Mary—appear as foundational Easter witnesses who proclaim the good news and the meaning of the resurrection to the congregation.

CHAPTER SIX

PICTURING THE MYRRHOPHORE

To this point only texts that place Martha at the tomb of Jesus have been considered. These texts have led to the hypothesis that the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore had a *Sitz* in the Easter celebrations of the churches particularly of the East. Supporting evidence for this theory comes from another quarter: the art and iconography of the early Church. As in the case of the texts already discussed, where Martha appears among the myrrhophores in early Christian iconography, she has either slipped by unnoticed or caused interpreters some confusion since—on the basis of the canonical texts at least—she appears misplaced. Yet when the images are considered on their own merit, a different picture emerges. Martha appears with surprising frequency and, as in the case of many of the texts, her appearance appears to be determined by liturgical considerations. This chapter is concerned with a number of images which explicitly identify Martha as one of the myrrhophores. These images are examined in the wider context of other early Christian art depicting the women at the tomb. The results of such an examination offer further support for the findings from the texts discussed thus far.

6.1 A Syrian Gospel Illumination

The first image to be considered here is a marginal illustration in the canon tables of a Syrian Gospel book. The manuscript, *Syriaque 33*, currently in the collection of the Bibliotheque Nationale de France in Paris, is a standard Peshîṭṭâ text (description in Zotenberg 1874: 13; see also Buchthal and Kurz 1968: 19). Since the manuscript has lost its colophon its origin is unknown. A notice on fol. 10r identifies it as belonging to the monastery of Mar Ananias in Mardin in Northern Syria, though Leroy (1964: 200) rightly comments that, since the monastery was founded in 783 CE, this note must be dated after this time and only attests to its location in the monastery in the eighth century, not its location prior to that time. The manuscript is certainly older than the monastery: palaeography has been used to date it to the sixth century (Cecchelli, Furlani, and Salmi 1959: 29). Nordenfalk (1938: 224, 247–248) argues that the style of the canon tables points to the first half of the sixth century.[1] The illuminations were completed at the same time as the canon tables, for in fol. 3v one column of the table has been interrupted to provide space for the hand of Mary (Leroy 1964: pl. 35). The manuscript was intended for liturgical usage, as is indicated by the lectionary headings inserted in the text. These lectionary headings likewise point to a sixth-century dating, since they correspond with the lectionary of the Rabbula Gospels (dated 586 CE) and with *Vat. Syr. 12*, a manuscript dated to 527 CE (Leroy 1964: 200).

Canon tables serve the function of helping readers to locate texts by listing the parallel pericopes. Often these tables are richly illustrated. Far from inconsequential preliminaries, these tables and their illustrations are designed as "a visual aid for meditation, a means of preparing the soul by removing distractions" (Mathews 1986: 7) and are consequently a significant and integral part of the manuscript. According to Nersēs Šnorhali, twelfth-century catholikos of Armenia, the images of the canon tables

> possess within themselves profound mysteries, unrevealed meanings, and hidden ingenuities which are not to be passed by in vain…when by this manifest color, taste, smell, hearing and rest we ascend to the spiritual, and to the rational enjoyment (of) the good tidings of God which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which the heart of man has not recalled, which God (has) prepared for His loved ones. (Mathews and Sanjian 1991: 3)

Syrian canon tables are unique in also including miniatures in their margins, alongside decorations (Nordenfalk 1938: 239; Wessel 1966b: 775). Thus *Syr. 33* intersperses a number of gospel scenes with decorative motifs, such as a fountain, peacock and bird killing a snake. Since these decorative motifs are placed on the same level as the gospel scenes, Nordenfalk argues that they form part of a single series with Christological meaning. Since the illustrations show no observable relationship with the canon tables themselves, he further concludes that the series of illustrations was not originally designed for the canon tables. He proposes the Diatessaron as the most likely candidate.

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[1] Nordenfalk's careful study of the canon tables suggests that, of four extant Syriac Gospel manuscripts from the sixth and seventh century, *Syr. 33* preserves the most original form of the tables (1938: 233). While the more famous Rabbula Gospels include three rows of miniatures beside each table, providing a ground for each set of figures, *Syr. 33* depicts only one figure beside each table. The larger size and absence of any ground integrates the figures much more closely with the canon table itself, whose arcades likewise hang 'in the air' rather than being placed on any ground. Thus the illustrations beside the canon tables appear more ancient in *Syr. 33* than in the Rabbula Gospels (Nordenfalk 1938: 250; so also Weitzmann 1970: 5; Cecchelli, Furlani, and Salmi 1959: 29). Leroy (1964: 200) suggests that this argument needs to be reviewed on the basis of further examples of Syrian canon tables which have come to light since then (Leroy 1957), however the manuscripts which he presents do not affect the argument presented here.

> Dass es illustrierte Diatessaron-Handschriften gegeben hat, lassen gerade die christologischen Randminiaturen der syrischen Kanontafeln vermuten. Denn wir können diese nicht besser erklären, als mit der Annahme, dass sie die Reste einer ursprünglich für das Diatessaron geschaffene Randillustration darstellen. Wir haben, wenn diese Annahme das Richtige trifft, den Ursprung des betreffenden Bilderzyklus im IV., vielleicht sogar im III. Jahrhundert zu suchen. Und wirklich lässt eine ikongraphische Würdigung der Randillustration der Pariser Kanontafeln vermuten, dass sie auf einen Archetypus von solch ehrwürdigem Alter zurückgehe. (1938: 252–253)[2]

Less convincing is the argument of Leroy, who judges the series as showing no internal harmony and contents himself simply to attribute this lack of coherence to the illustrator: "Il faut donc mettre au compte de l'auteur du programme décoratif le manque d'harmonie et de symétrie" (1964: 201). This conclusion fails to convince because it is based on the implausible assumption that it is possible for an illustrator to create an incoherent series of illustrations for a manuscript. A series of images might appear random and incoherent to readers of the manuscript far removed from the original time and cultural setting of the author of the illustrations. Alternatively an iconographic programme could lose coherence if it is copied from one context to another (as in Nordenfalk's proposal regarding the original context of the cycle of images). In these cases the source of the incoherence lies not in the author of the images, however, but rather in the inability of the readers to interpret or retrieve the original context of the images. Thus Nordenfalk's approach, which looks for an internal organising principle, is certainly the more correct. Whether the source of the iconographic cycle is to be sought in the Diatessaron and is to be dated as early fourth or even third century is another question. On the basis of Reil's (1910) analysis of early Christian iconographic cycles of the life of Jesus such an early dating would seem optimistic.[3]

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[2] "Precisely the Christological miniatures of the Syriac canon tables suggest the existence of illustrated manuscripts of the Diatessaron. For we cannot explain these better, than to suppose that they are the remains of a series of miniatures initially created for the Diatessaron. If we are correct in this assumption, the origin for this iconographic cycle is to be placed in the fourth, or perhaps even the third, century. Indeed an iconographic appreciation of the miniatures of the Paris canon tables [i.e., the tables of *Syr. 33*] leads one to suppose that they derive from an archetype of such honourable age."

6.1.1 *The image*

The last of the images in *Syr. 33* (fol. 9v) depicts the women at the tomb (fig. 1). Two women appear on one side of the table, the angel and tomb on the other. One of the women carries a censer. Above the angel is inscribed the Peshîṭṭâ text of Matthew 28:5–6.

ܥܢܐ ܡܠܐܟܐ ܘܐܡܪ
ܠܢܫ̈ܐ ܐܢܬܝܢ ܠܐ ܬܕܚܠܢ ܝܕܥ
ܐܢܐ ܓܝܪ ܕܠܝܫܘܥ
ܕܐܙܕܩܦ ܒܥܝܢ ܐܢܬܝܢ
ܠܐ ܗܘܐ ܬܢܢ ܩܡ ܠܗ
ܓܝܪ ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܬܐܝܢ
ܚܙܝܢ ܕܘܟܬܐ ܕܣܝܡ
ܗܘܐ ܒܗ ܡܪܝܐ

> The angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified: he is not here, he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord[4] was laid.

The notice above the women reads,

ܡܪܝܡ ܐܡܐ
ܕܡܪܢ ܘܡܪܬܐ
ܟܕ ܐܬܝ ܗܘܝ
ܕܢܚܬܡ̈ܢ ܩܒܪܐ
ܕܡܪܢ

> Mary, (the) mother of our Lord, and Martha, while they had come that they might seal the tomb of our Lord. (Translation M. Lattke, pers. comm.)

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[3] According to Reil (1910: 119) such cycles can be attested from the beginning of the fifth century, though unverifiable reports attribute the creation or instigation of such cycles already to Constantine. The earliest extant examples of illuminated Gospel books date from the sixth century.

[4] Here the text of the inscription differs from the Peshîṭṭâ, which reads not "the Lord" (ܡܪܝܐ) but "our Lord" (ܡܪܢ). The reading "the Lord" appears in the Ḥarklean version, while the earliest Syriac translation, the Sinaiticus, omits the word entirely (Kiraz 1996: 1.451).

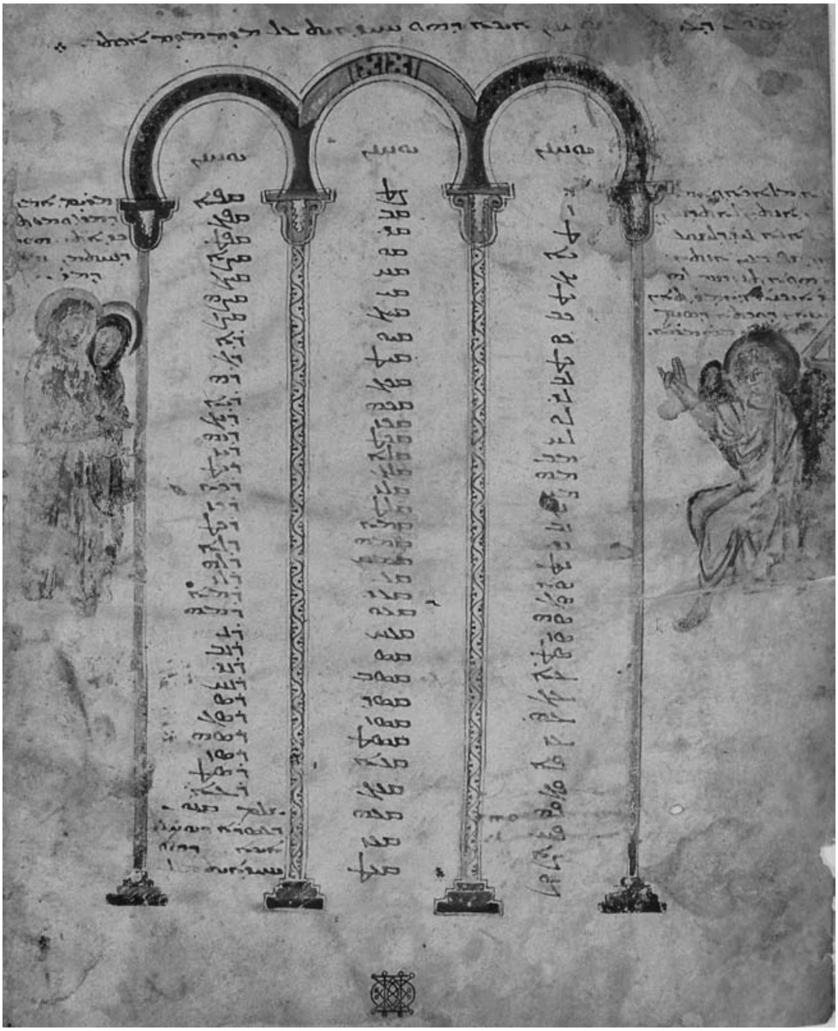

Figure 1. *Syr. 33* fol. 9v. Bibliotheque Nationale de France.

The inscription has no obvious metre and therefore does not appear to be a citation of a hymn (S. Brock, pers. comm.).

The appearance of Mary the mother at the tomb of Jesus is well attested in Syrian Christianity (Murray 1971; 1975; Brock 1982). She also appears in other images, most significantly the Easter image of the Rabbula Gospels (fig. 2), as well as in an early Christian icon from Sinai (Weitzmann 1966; 1974: 43). Other texts and images placing Mary Theotokos at the tomb are discussed by Gianelli (1953), Bellet (1954)

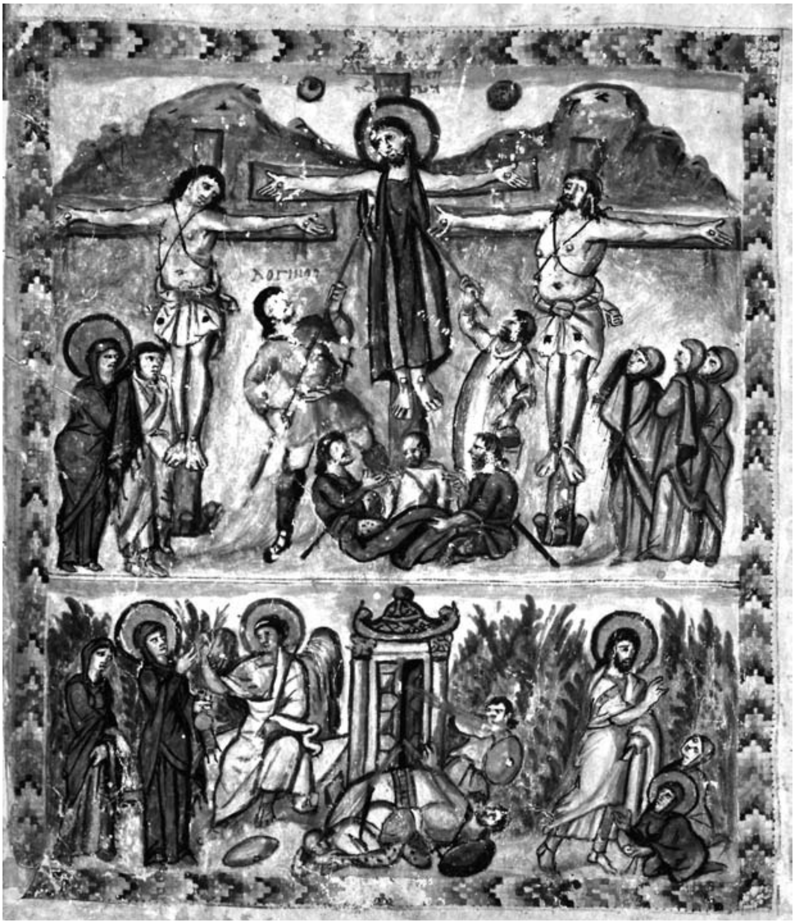

Figure 2. Rabbula Gospels fol. 13r. Medicean-Laurentian library, Florence. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 1.56, c.13r Su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali E' vietata ogni ulteriore riproduzione con qualsiasi mezzo.

and Breckenridge (1957). It has been suggested that the Diatessaron did not specify the Magdalene in John 20 and that consequently Syrian Christians identified the Mary in the Johannine Easter narrative with Mary Theotokos (Shoemaker 2001: 566). Such an identification is also evident in the Coptic *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle* (Budge 1913: 187–188, 192, 212). The appearance of Mary Theotokos in the miniature of *Syr. 33* is thus rather less surprising than the appearance of Martha, or, for that matter, the suggestion that the women have come "to seal the tomb."

The tendency to read from a canonical perspective has led to the expected, but rather unsuccessful, attempt to make this image and its superscription conform to canonical versions of the story. Sörries simply identifies the women as "die beiden Marien" (1993: 102) and cites Matthew 28:1–6 and parallels as interpretive text, failing to notice both the presence of the Theotokos and of Martha. Nordenfalk likewise reads the Theotokos out of the text by translating ܐܡܐ as 'servant' rather than 'mother.' He further interprets the action of the women as 'preparing' rather than 'sealing' the tomb: "Maria, die Dienerin des Herrn, und Marta (?), als sie gingen, um das Grab des Herrn fertig zu machen" (1938: 242). Cecchelli dubs the identification of Martha "a strange interpretation" and wonders "whether the legends may not be of later date" (1959: 30). Not only is the assignation of a 'later date' not an explanation for the presence of Martha, but, as has already been demonstrated, the tradition of Martha at the tomb of Jesus is attested from the second century and in Greek texts which predate these two manuscripts. There is therefore no inherent reason to doubt the label identifying Martha in *Syr. 33* or its dating.[5] Rather, the question is what the identification of Martha in this image reveals about the identification of the myrrhophores in sixth-century Syria, or about the relationship of this image to canonical and other texts and to other images.

Leroy, while noting the appearance of Martha also on an early Christian amulet, suggests that the manuscript is the sole witness to this iconography. In this he is mistaken; there are a number of other manuscripts containing images of Martha at the tomb of Jesus. Moreover, in dubbing it an "*unicum*" (1964: 206) he reveals an interpretive bias which assumes that only images in which one of the women is explicitly labelled 'Martha' actually depict Martha, while images in which the women at the tomb are not labelled do not depict Martha. The image in the Rabbula Gospels (fig. 2) serves as a good example. In both cases, one of the women is Mary Theotokos (labeled in *Syr.33* and identified by nimbus and purple *maphorion* in the Rabbula Gospels; Sörries 1993: 98). The women arrive from the left to be greeted by an angel seated in front of the tomb, in identical garb and pose. Both images appear in sixth-century Syriac Gospel manuscripts. Why, then, should it be assumed *a priori* that the canonical text is a better guide to the identity of the two women in the Rabbula image than the inscriptions in *Syr.33*?[6]

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[5] So also Lepage (1987: 178), who observes that no less than three important Syriac scholars (Zotenberg, Baumstark and Leroy) examined the manuscript and the inscription. None of these suggest that the inscription dates from a time later than the image.

6.2 An Early Christian Amulet

It has already been indicated that the image in *Syr.33* is not the only image that attests Martha at the tomb. A second image appears on a copper amulet published by Schlumberger (1893) which was then in the collection of the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliotheque Nationale de France (fig. 3).[7] Schlumberger assigned the amulet to Egypt in the sixth or seventh century. Vikan dates it "around 600 C.E." (1982: 250).

6.2.1 *The image*

The top half of the amulet depicts the crucifixion. Jesus, dressed in a tunic (colobium?),[8] is depicted between the two thieves. All three have their arms extended from their waist, a pose that may be the result of contracting a model with outstretched arms—such as is seen in the Rabbula Gospels, for example—to a round medallion. Lepage

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[6] So, for example, Sörries who describes the image in the Rabbula Gospels without further comment as "der Auferstandene erscheint den beiden Marien" (1993: 98). Apostolos-Cappadona is certain that she "can clearly identify Mary Magdalene," both as the woman standing nearest to the cross and represented twice with the Virgin in the lower register of the image (2005: 134–135).

[7] The amulet appears be lost or destroyed: curators at the Cabinet des Medailles were unable to locate it to enable an inspection. The only reproductions of the amulet of which I am aware are the line-drawing originally published by Schlumberger (1893: 188) and the photograph published by Villette (1957: pl. 35).

[8] In the Rabbula Gospels (fig. 2), the Sinai icon and a fresco at S. Maria Antiqua in Rome Christ is clearly wearing a colobium, always shown purple with gold clavi. Weitzmann (1974: 40) suggests that such depictions of Christ are Palestinian (so also Reil 1904: 63–64) and finds the colobium also on several ampullae at Monza and Bobbio (e.g., fig. 4; cf. Grabar 1958: pls. 22, 24, 40). Kötzsche-Breitenbruch (1984: 236) disputes the identification of the colobium on the ampullae of Monza and Bobbio, arguing that these depict Christ in tunic and pallium. She does however note the colobium on an ampulla in Stuttgart. The level of detail on the ampullae makes it difficult to determine whether the folds of the garment are to be interpreted as pallium or colobium. Moreover it needs to be asked whether the distinction between these garments was known and relevant to the artisans who created the ampullae and amulet. On the Egyptian amulet the robe is gathered at the side, giving the impression of a toga or *chiton* and *himation*. Wessel (1966c: 21) suggests that the crucifixion with colobium is Palestinian and also that a crucifixion image is attested in the church of the Holy Sepulchre (so Reil 1904: 56).

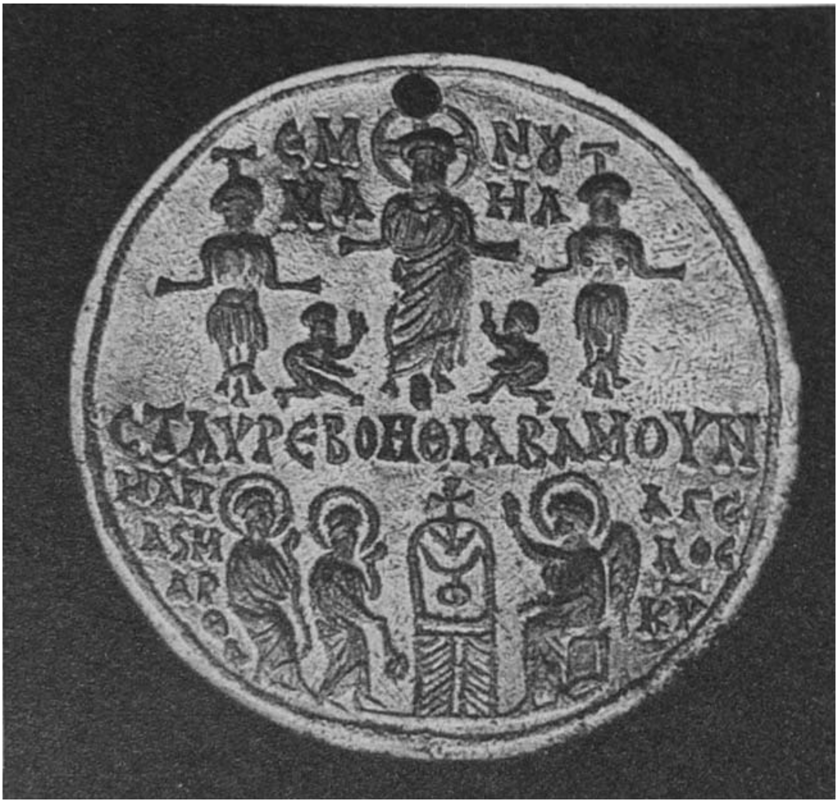

Figure 3. Amulet. Cabinet des Medailles, France

(1987: 192 n.83) interprets the two figures depicted below the cross as pilgrims, though a comparison with the pose of the soldiers depicted in the Rabbula image (particularly the position of the arms) suggests that these figures might equally represent the soldiers gambling for the tunic of Christ (Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1984: 234). The image in the lower half portrays the tomb in the centre, an angel seated to the right (inscribed ΑΓΕΛΟΣ $\overline{\text{ΚΥ}}$, "angel of the Lord") and two women carrying censers arriving from the left. These two women are inscribed "Mary" and "Martha" (ΜΑΡΙΑΣ ΜΑΡΘΑ). Between the two images an inscription, ΣΤΑΥΡΕ ΒΟΗΘΙ ΑΒΑΜΟΥΝ ("cross, protect Aba Moun"), indicates the apotropaic function of the amulet.[9]

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[9] Compare the 'Kyrie Boethei' formula seen on other amulets (Fulghum 2001).

The amulet shows a striking resemblance to the iconography on ampullae known from Monza and Bobbio (fig. 4; cf. Grabar 1958: 65, pls. 22, 24, 26, 28; Vikan 1982: 41) which have been dated in the late sixth or early seventh century (Grabar 1958; Engemann 1973), to a reliquary box now at the Museo Sacro in the Vatican (Morey 1926), to images on armbands, rings (Vikan 1979; 1984), pendants, bronze censers (Bénazeth 1988; Richter-Siebels 1990) and clay tokens (Camber 1981). The iconography on these artefacts follows a standard form. The image always depicts the tomb in the centre, in a form that intends to reflect or evoke the church of the Holy Sepulchre (Barag and Wilkinson 1974; Richter-Siebels 1990). Two myrrhophores arrive from the left, the one closest to the tomb bearing a censer with which she incenses the tomb.[10] The second clutches ointment close to the chest or may also carry a censer. The women are wearing a *maphorion* and are nimbed. An angel is seated to the right of the tomb, hand raised in greeting. Inscriptions on the ampullae do not identify the figures, as on the Egyptian amulet, but reproduce the words of a sacred person, for example the announcement of the angel (Grabar 1958: 13). Sometimes the image of the women at the tomb appears paired with a crucifixion scene, as in the Egyptian amulet (fig. 3) and ampulla (fig. 4). At other times it may appear as part of a cycle which includes a number of other scenes from the life of Christ, including the annunciation, birth, baptism, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

This iconography has been connected to pilgrimages to sacred sites, in this case sites in Jerusalem. Pilgrims came not merely to see but particularly to touch holy objects or places, thereby to procure healing or a blessing (Vikan 1982: 5; 1984: 66).[11] Thus, for example, the fourth-century pilgrim Egeria describes a ritual during which pilgrims kissed a piece of the wood said to derive from the cross of Christ (Travels 37.1–3; Wilkinson 1981: 136–137) and the anonymous pilgrim of Piacenza (c. 570 CE) describes drinking water out of the skull of St Theodota "to

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[10] The exception to this are the rings and censers, on which typically only one woman is depicted (Richter-Siebels 1990: 133–152). Villette (1957: 61) distinguishes between a Syrian or Palestinian type characterised by two women coming from the left and an angel seated on the right and a Hellenistic form of the depiction of the myrrhophores in which three women are depicted arriving from the right and carrying neither oil jar nor censer, as in Palestine. This Hellenistic type is seen, for example, in the Munich ivory.

[11] Such pilgrimages were not always viewed in a positive light, as Cardman's (1993) review of the patristic rhetoric of holy places reveals.

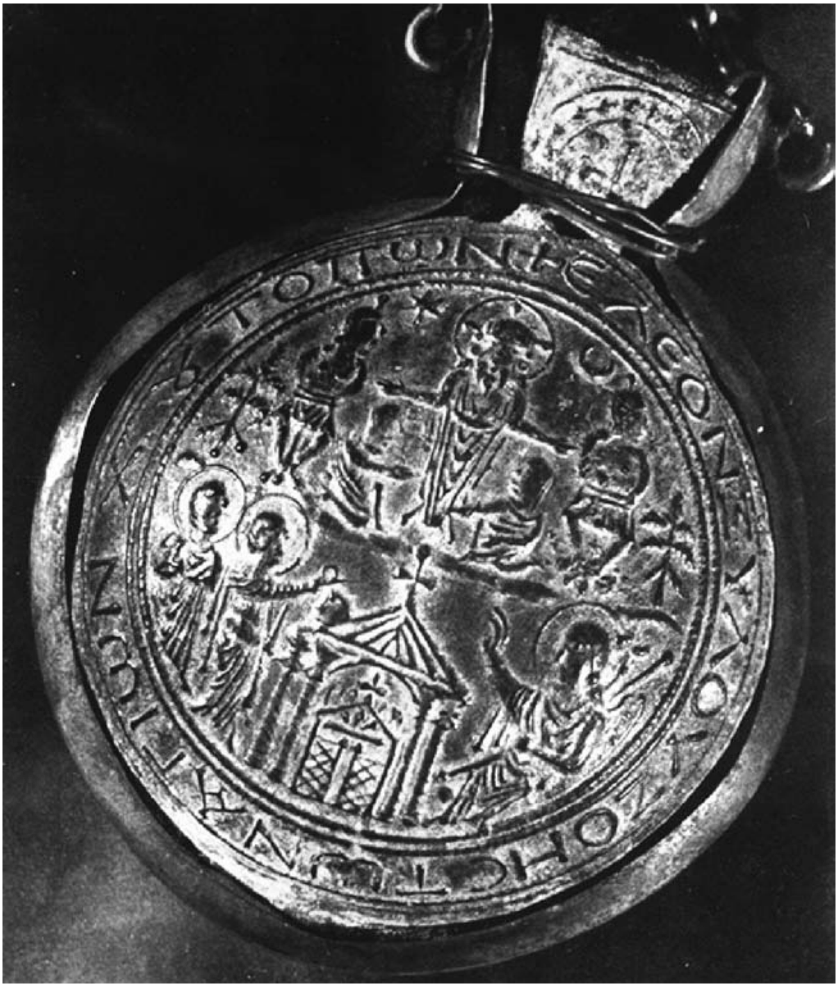

Figure 4. Ampulla 13. Cathedral treasury, Monza.

gain a blessing" (Wilkinson 1977: 84). In some cases the blessing that might be obtained from a holy place could be carried away, for example in oil or dust which had in some way come into contact with a holy place or a holy object (Kötting 1950: 404–409; Vikan 1984). Again the pilgrim of Piacenza preserves the mechanism by which such *eulogia* were created at the shrine of the Holy Sepulchre.

> …in the place where the Lord's body was laid, at the head, has been placed a bronze lamp. It burns there day and night, and we took a blessing from it, and then put it back. Earth is brought to the Tomb and put inside, and those who go in take some as a blessing.…

> In the courtyard of the basilica is a small room where they keep the Wood of the Cross. We venerated it with a kiss. The title is also there which they placed over the Lord's head, on which they wrote, 'This is the King of the Jews.' This I have seen, and had it in my hand and kissed it.... At the moment when the Cross is brought out of the small room for veneration, and arrives in the court to be venerated, a star appears in the sky, and comes over the place where they lay the Cross. It stays overhead whilst they are venerating the Cross, and they offer oil to be blessed in little flasks. When the mouth of one of the little flasks touches the Wood of the Cross, the oil instantly bubbles over, and unless it is closed very quickly it all spills out. When the Cross is taken back to its place, the star also vanishes, and appears no more once the Cross has been put away. (Wilkinson 1977: 83)

Many of the ampullae bear inscriptions such as "oil of the cross of life from the holy places of Christ," "blessing of the Lord of the holy places of Christ" (Grabar 1958: 13). These *eulogia* were powerful apotropaic objects that protected the owner or wearer from the demonic or from other harm and that could transmit healing (Vikan 1982: 12–13; Engemann 1973; 1995b).[12] Indeed, the 'oil of the wood of life,' that is, oil which had come into contact with the wood of the cross, was said to be so powerful that it was able to transmit eternal life. Kötzsche-Breitenbruch (1984: 233) suggests that this might explain why such ampullae were placed in graves.

Vikan argues that from early on images, independent of holy substances, were also valued for their prophylactic or healing powers (1982: 31–32; so also Grabar 1958: 64–65). Thus this iconography came to have a life independent of *eulogia*, or blessed substances. The Egyptian amulet shows this development (so Vikan 1982: 40–41).[13] Significantly the amulet invokes the cross, rather than God or Jesus, revealing the connection to relics and the power contained therein.

The icon of the myrrhophores, then, is a powerful, apotropaic image. It receives this power initially by association with a sacred place (the

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[12] The Pilgrim of Piacenza describes the column at which Jesus was said to have been scourged and which bears "the marks of both his hands, his fingers, and his palms." Ribbons which touch these marks become powerful cures "for any kind of disease" when worn around the neck (Wilkinson 1981: 84). Similar healing powers are attributed by Eusebius to a plant growing at the foot of a statue of Jesus (*HE* 7.18.2). Vikan (1984; 1990) has further argued for a specifically medicinal function of the rings, armbands and clay tokens, an interpretation which has been critiqued by Walker (2001).

[13] Compare also an amulet in Stuttgart (Württembergisches Landesmuseum Inv. 1981–165), which likewise depicts the crucifixion on one side and the women at the tomb on the other.

Holy Sepulchre) and with substances rendered potent by contact with the tomb or cross. The apotropaic potency of the image is also attested in the treatise against the iconoclasts of Nikephoros (818–820 CE), in which he describes as ancient practice the custom of wearing gold and silver phylacteries bearing images of life of Christ and specifically of the passion and resurrection (PG 100.433; cf. Mango 1972: 176).

It was noted that the image of the myrrhophores at times appears in a cycle. Such cycles are seen on some of the ampullae (Grabar 1958: pls. 5–7, 46–52), on rings and armbands (Vikan 1982; 1998: fig. 8.31), on the Sancta Sanctorum reliquary and on censers (Richter-Siebels 1990). This cycle of images has been called the 'pilgrim's cycle' (Reil 1910: 139–144), to distinguish it from other iconographic cycles depicting the life of Jesus, such as narrative cycles or feast cycles.[14] The focus of the pilgrim's cycle are the various *loca sancta* visited in the Holy Land, while the feast cycle depicts the major feasts celebrated by the Church, typically in a cycle of twelve (Kitzinger 1988).

Kitzinger observes that in both pilgrim and feast cycles the focus of the art is not on a historical depiction of the life of Christ or the biblical texts, as in narrative cycles, rather "the life of Christ is visualized in terms that correspond to the faithful's present day experience," be it in terms of the experience of "visits to the holy sites in Palestine,"[15] in the case of pilgrim's cycles, or "participation in the liturgy" in the case of the feast cycle (1988: 60). One ought not to draw such a distinction between feast and pilgrim's cycles too strongly, however, lest it be imagined that a visit to a sacred shrine and participation in liturgy are separate events for a pilgrim. For pilgrims the heart of the pilgrimage is not merely the visit to the holy site, but the participation in liturgy and ritual at these sites. This is amply demonstrated by the accounts of Egeria and the Piacenza pilgrim. It is not surprising, therefore, to observe a continuity between pilgrims and feast cycles,

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[14] On pilgrim cycles see Reil (1910), Kitzinger (1954; 1988), Villette (1957), Wessel (1966c), Vikan (1982; 1998), Ristow (1983) and Jastrzebowska (1995). André Grabar (1972: 2.332) suggests the scenes of the pilgrim cycle—annunciation, nativity, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, baptism of Jesus and Transfiguration—serve to sum up the theophany of Christ. Such a focus coheres well with the idea of *loca sancta* as places where theophanies or other divine events occurred and consequently as powerful places.

[15] The question of the influence of local topography and architecture on the iconography on the ampullae and other pilgrimage art has been widely discussed (Smirnov 1897; Ainalov 1961; Engemann 1973; Weitzmann 1974; Hamilton 1974; Grigg 1974; Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1984). Whatever the difference of opinion on the extent to which these images reflect the architecture at the site, or indeed which part(s) of the buildings are reproduced, there is general consensus that these images reflect, or intend to evoke, the Constantinian buildings.

> a coherent development linking pilgrims' amulets and feast icons, a development spanning the centuries from the 6th to the 10th and not seriously interrupted by Iconoclasm, though perhaps temporarily halted by that conflict. (Kitzinger 1988: 67)

More importantly, this means that it is not only the pilgrim's experience of the location and architecture, but the experience of the ritual which provides the context for interpreting the image, rather than the canonical text. That the canonical texts are not the primary texts for interpreting the images is apparent from the number of key elements in the images that find no explanation in the canonical texts. There is no mention of incense or censers in the Gospels. The women come to anoint the corpse, not to incense it, much less to incense the tomb, as they do in the images, and the tomb is described as a cave, not a building.

6.3 The myrrhophores in the liturgy of Jerusalem

The liturgy in Jerusalem is shaped centrally by the *loca sancta*. The presence of sacred sites in Jerusalem led to the development of 'stational liturgy' in which the various feasts of the church year were celebrated at the site at which the event occurred (Baldovin 1987), in this case the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.[16] The key documents for the liturgy in Jerusalem are the diary of Egeria in which she details her participation in the Easter services in the late fourth century (Pétré 1948; English translation in Wilkinson 1981), the Armenian and Georgian hagiopolite lectionaries (Tarchnischvili 1959),[17] and codex *Stavrou 43*, which provides the *typikon* of the church in Jerusalem as well as liturgical texts for Holy Week and Easter Week (Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1894: 1–261).[18] It is this last text which is of greatest interest since it names a group of myrrhophores who play a role in the Easter celebrations.

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[16] For a detailed description of the Easter celebrations in Jerusalem see Thibaut (1926: 114–127) and Bertonière (1972).

[17] The Armenian lectionary dates from the fifth century and "describes a liturgy of specifically Jerusalem type" (Bertonière 1972: 8–9) while the Georgian lectionary "represents a later stage of development in the Jerusalem liturgy" dating perhaps from the eighth century (ibid.: 11). Helmut Leeb (1970) produced a detailed study of the latter, limited, however, to singing and the terminology related to such singing in the Georgian lectionary and the Jerusalem liturgy which it reflects.

These myrrhophores appear several times in the Easter Triodion. They appear first on Holy Saturday (Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1894: 179), when, at the second hour, they come to the Sepulchre to clean and prepare the lamps, chanting the liturgy of the hours while working. They are accompanied by the patriarch and numerous other clergy. When they have finished cleaning and preparing the lamps they sing the *Gloria Patri* and a hymn whose text is provided in the *typikon* (1894: 177–179). A deacon then chants the liturgy after which the Patriarch locks the tomb, taking the key with him and extinguishing the lamps.

The vespers service that night is followed by the Liturgy of St James, the second half of which is led by the patriarch from within the Sepulchre, using the Holy Stone as an altar.

> When they have completed the divine liturgy on the Holy Stone and have given the dismissal, the myrrhophores remain (ἀπομένουν δὲ οἱ[—αἱ][19] μυροφόροι), entering the all-holy and life-giving Sepulchre and incense and anoint it (καῒ θυμιάζουν καὶ μυρίζουν αὒτον·). And when they leave the church with all the people the church is locked, and nobody remains

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[18] Codex *Stavrou 43* was copied in 1122 CE from an earlier manuscript that has been dated to the late ninth or early tenth century (Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1894: iii).This date is determined from a litany commemorating Patriarch Nicholas, whose dates Papadopoulos-Kerameus gives as 932–947 CE. Since many of the buildings had been destroyed by the time the extant manuscript of the *typikon* was copied, and since by that time, moreover, "the services in the Anastasis were presided over by the Latin clergy and…the Orthodox Patriarch no longer resided in the Holy City" (Bertonière 1972: 13), the manuscript of 1122 CE clearly does not describe the current Easter celebrations. Dimitrijevski (1907; cited Bertonière 1972: 12–13) suggested that the *typikon* was in use in the first half of the tenth century, on the basis of the appearance of Patriarch Nicholas and the attribution of certain hymns to individuals, the last of whom lived in the tenth century. Baumstark (1905) noted several strata in the text and placed the earliest at the beginning of the eighth century (1915: 2), though he later revised his dating to the ninth century on the basis of the naming of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople (Baumstark 1927a: 19–20; see also Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1894: 78). Conversely, Cross (1965) claims that liturgical manuscripts provide evidence for liturgical practice only for the point at which the manuscript was copied, not for the practice of any putative source. While caution is certainly in order, this appears unduly skeptical, particularly in view of the observation that *Stavrou 43* certainly does not reflect current liturgical practice.

[19] Karras (2004: 111 n. 50) suggests that this mistaken masculine plural is the result of the copyist being confused by the second declension ending of the title for the women.

> there, not even one, and the church remains thus locked until the patriarch returns with the clergy at matins. (Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1894: 189)

Early the next morning the clergy gather in the vestry to change into white vestments. It appears that the myrrhophores are included among these, for Karras suggests "the rubrics for the paschal matins service make it impossible not to understand the term 'clergy' to include the myrrhbearers" (2004: 112).

> The doors of the church are immediately opened and the patriarch together with the clergy enters the church, chanting the 'Christ is risen.' The patriarch and the archdeacon immediately enter the Holy Sepulchre, these two alone, with the myrrhophores standing before the Holy Sepulchre (καὶ οἱ(—αἱ) μυροφόρ(οι) ἱστάμ(εναι) ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ Ἁγίου Τάφου·). Then the patriarch shall come out to them and say to the women (αὐταῖς): "Rejoice: Christ is risen!" Then the myrrhophores fall at his feet and, rising (ἀνιστάμεναι), they cense the patriarch, sing the *polychronion*[20] to him and return to the place where they customarily stand (εἰς τ(ὸν) τόπον ὅπου ἐστιν ἔθος νὰ στήκωσιν·). (Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1894: 191)

The myrrhophores appear one last time at the end of the Easter matins service.

> Immediately the two deacons go with the censers, and two subdeacons with two candlesticks before them, until they enter the *Bema* and stand in the middle of the *solea*.[21] In the same way also the two myrrhophores (ὁμοίως καὶ αἱ β' μυροφόροι) enter before the two deacons, having the *triskellia*[22] and before them two deaconesses, they also having two candlesticks and lit candles before them and thus they stand, one on the right of the life-giving Sepulchre and the other on the left (καὶ στήκουσαι οὕτως ἡ μία εἰς τὰ δεξία τοῦ ζωοποιοῦ Τάφου καὶ ἡ ἡτέρα εἰς τὸ ἀριστερόν·). They cense until the holy Gospel has been read and then they enter the Holy (Sepulchre), cense it and anoint it (καὶ θυμιάζουν, ἕως πληρωθῇ

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[20] The *polychronion* is a hymn of acclamation sung either for an emperor or patriarch (Tillyard 1911–12: 239–241). Leeb does not mention this hymn in his description of the hymns of the Georgian lectionary, but does describe the singing of a psalm before the Gospel reading on Easter Sunday that is introduced with the term 'cardgomay,' a Georgian term that he notes corresponds to the Greek παρίσταμαι, ἵσταμαι, προέρχομαι and which he consequently translates as "zum Aufstehen (nach der Kniebeuge)" (1970: 197). Does this psalm sung after this 'rising' correspond with the singing of the *polychronion* after the rising of the myrrhophores?

[21] The *Bema* is "a type of raised platform or pulpit which was located in the center of the *solea*, the part of the nave immediately in front of the sanctuary and iconostasis" (Karras 2002: 159 n. 43).

[22] A portable lectern used for reading the Gospel (Day 1993: 294).

> τὸ ἅγιον εὐαγγέλιον· καὶ τότε εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τ(ὸν) Ἁγιον (Τάφον) καὶ θυμιάζουσαι αὐτον καὶ μυρίζουν το(ν)·). (Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1894: 199)

This, then, is how the myrrhophores appear in the *typikon*. Bertonière concludes from the reference of the myrrhophores returning εἰς τ(ὸν) τόπον ὅπου ἐστιν ἔθος νὰ στήκωσιν that "their role was something of a permanent office" (1972: 50 n. 108) and further raises the possibility that there was a similar group of women in Constantinople inspired by the Jerusalem group (see 6.6 below).

Karras suggests the myrrhophores were probably either consecrated, like the widows, or ordained to a minor order. She considers the latter more likely, given the myrrhophores' "important liturgical functions during the Easter services and the *typikon*'s assumption that they are part of the clergy" (2005: 114). In support of this she further adduces the practice of the Byzantine church of restricting liturgical functions to clergy. Since the only reference to the myrrhophores is in the *Typikon*, where they appear only in the context of the Easter celebrations, and in the later account of Anthony of Novgorod,[23] it is also conceivable that these 'myrrhophores' are not so much a permanent order, but a part of one of the other orders; that there are deaconesses charged with the task of caring for the Sepulchre and that some of these deaconesses participate in the Easter liturgy enacting the role of the myrrhophores and in this context are called myrrhophores. This would explain both why the myrrhophores can appear as clergy (since deaconesses are clergy) and why there is no other evidence for the order; no liturgies of ordination for 'myrrhophores,' for example.

It is not clear whether there were only two myrrhophores or more. While only two participate in the gospel procession, Karras rightly points out that the rubrics also only mention "the two deacons," though

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[23] Anthony of Novgorod, a Russian pilgrim who visited Constantinople in 1200 CE, mentions "Myrrhbearers" singing in Hagia Sophia: "And not far from this prothesis the Myrrhbearers sing, and there stands before them a great icon of the most pure Theotokos holding Christ…" (Taft 1998: 67). Taft proposes that these women are probably deaconesses, thus members of the clergy, who assisted at the liturgy in the church (1998: 68). Valerie Karras likewise suggests (2004: 283 n. 49) that Anthony's 'Myrrhbearers' are a mistaken reference to deaconesses, the mistake resulting from the fact that the Russian church did not have deaconesses but used the title myrrhophore for women serving in a range of lay roles in the church. Anthony locates these women "in exactly the same spot as Constantine Porphyrogenitus had located the deaconesses over two hundred years earlier" (Karras 2004: 283–284).

"there were undoubtedly more than two connected to the church" (2005: 113). Be that as it may, it appears that only two myrrhophores played a significant role in the Easter liturgy. This is explicit in the last section which names two myrrhophores and implicit in their previous appearance where the myrrhophores fall at the feet of the patriarch. Since the Gospel of Matthew was the Gospel of choice for the church at Jerusalem and forms the basis for the Great Week celebrations (so Talley 1986: 42–47), it is most likely that the myrrhophores' falling at the feet of the patriarch enacts Matthew 28:9 (so also Bertonière 1972: 95; Dmitrievskij 1907: 414). The greeting (Χαίρετε), the women falling at the feet and worshiping all match the Matthean account perfectly.[24] Thus it is most probable that there were two myrrhophores involved here also.

Conversely, Karras suggests that precisely

> the Jerusalem Church's propensity to recreate the passion events as closely as possible… [renders it] likely that there were more than two *myrophoroi* since the gospel accounts generally list more than two women at the crucifixion, if not at the tomb itself. (2005: 113)

Yet it is specifically the empty tomb narratives, not the crucifixion accounts, which are of relevance here. There is good evidence in the text to suggest that the enactment of the Easter narrative follows the Matthean account and little evidence to suggest that another account is being followed—for in Mark and Luke the women do not encounter Jesus at all and in John there is no mention of Mary falling at the feet of Jesus. While it is possible that there were more than two myrrhophores in Jerusalem, particularly if their role was a permanent office, there is consequently little reason to imagine that more than two assisted in the Easter matins service. Whether more than two myrrhophores assisted with the cleaning of the lamps on Holy Saturday cannot be determined from the text.

There are some ready parallels between this text and the images surveyed earlier. The actions of the myrrhophores who incense and anoint the Sepulchre match well the depictions in pilgrim iconography in which the women are shown swinging censers towards the tomb. Similarly the curious inscription in *Syr. 33* which claims that Mary and Martha "had come that they might seal the tomb of our Lord" becomes intelligible in the context of the liturgical actions described, for the women do indeed come to anoint the tomb, rather than the body, both at the end of the Holy Saturday liturgy and in the Easter matins liturgy.[25]

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[24] Τότε πίπτουσιν οἱ (= αἱ) μυροφόροι εἰς τοὺς πόδας αὐτου,…καὶ πολυχρονίζουσιν αὐτῷ compare Mtt 28:9: καὶ ἰδοὺ Ἰησοῦς ὑπήντησεν αὐταῖς λέγων, Χαίρετε. αἱ δὲ προσελθοῦσαι ἐκράτησαν αὐτοῦ τοὺς πόδας καὶ προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ.

It was suggested earlier that the *typikon* was in use in the ninth and first half of the tenth century (see n. 18). The pilgrim Egeria, however, makes no explicit mention of the myrrhophores in her description of the Easter celebrations in the church of Jerusalem in the late fourth century (*Travels* 39.1–4). Karras (2005: 110) therefore assumes that the myrrhophores did not yet exist at that time and consequently places the development of the order of the myrrhophores between the fifth and ninth centuries. This may be reading too much into Egeria's silence, however. Both Egeria and the Armenian lectionary reveal a structure in which the Easter Vigil liturgy with the baptism of the catechumens was followed by a procession to the Anastasis where the Gospel account of the resurrection was read, followed by a second liturgy celebrated in the Anastasis (Bertonière 1972: 74).[26] The chanting of responsorial psalms noted by Egeria corresponds with the responsorial psalmody called τὰ ἐπακουστά in the *typikon* (1972: 80–87). Bertonière further suggests that the

> incensation of the myrophoroi on Easter Sunday during the Gospel and afterwards within the tomb itself may very well be related to Egeria's 'thiamataria inferuntur intro spelunca Anastasis.' (1972: 88)

This is not to suggest that the ritual involving the myrrhophores already existed at the time of Egeria, much less that it existed in the fully-developed form seen in the *typikon*. It is merely to suggest that Egeria's account makes it difficult to conclude with certainty that no such ritual yet existed. The emergence of a wealth of pilgrimage art depicting two women with censers at the tomb in the sixth and seventh centuries would suggest that the ritual was already established at that time so that, if not already known by Egeria, its development is probably to be sought in the fifth or, at the latest, the sixth century.

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[25] Even Nordenfalk's rather free translation that the women have come "um das Grab des Herrn fertig zu machen" (1938: 242) fits in such a context, for the myrrhophores have been involved in preparing the Sepulchre on Holy Saturday, both cleaning and preparing the lamps and censing and anointing the tomb before it is locked in preparation for the Easter liturgy.

[26] The question of the nature of the services—just which offices were celebrated on Easter Sunday morning—need not detain us since it matters little whether the myrrhophores appear in the context of Orthros or the regular Cathedral liturgy (it is covered in detail by Bertonière 1972: 72–105).

Baumstark (1923: 15) observed that in the *typikon* the two myrrhophores stand on either side of the tomb incensing it, while most of the images of the myrrhophores depict the women arriving from the left. He therefore posited an earlier version of the ritual in which the women arrived from one side to be met by a cleric who played the role of the angel. This is of course possible, but unnecessarily complicated. For one thing the myrrhophores must process to the tomb in order to assume their place on either side of it. The images might thus simply reproduce a different part of the liturgy than that posited by Baumstark. More importantly, the patriarch who plays the role of the angel speaks the Easter announcement from within (or from the doorway of) the Sepulchre. However, this would be extremely difficult to reproduce within the confines of an ampulla, amulet or censer. Hence the space restrictions imposed by the objects may have resulted in the shift of the angel from within the doorway to the side of the Sepulchre and the consequent placement of both women on the other side. There are other images in which the women are depicted on either side of the tomb (with or without an angel in the doorway), to which I will turn next. Notably these images all occur in manuscripts, which offer much more space.

The *typikon* provides a text which fits well with the iconography of the myrrhophores. It postdates these images by several centuries, but the extent of the similarities renders plausible the suggestion that a similar liturgical context already existed at the time that the images were created.[27] The myrrhophores are not named in the *typikon* and as such the *typikon* has not provided an explanation for the aspect of the iconography that is of most interest here, namely the presence of Martha in the Syriac Gospel book and the Egyptian amulet. There is other evidence, however, which suggests that these two myrrhophores in the liturgy of Jerusalem might have been known as Mary and Martha.

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[27] It also provides a useful corrective to other interpretations. For example, on the basis of Torjesen's (1998) association of the Orans with women's liturgical roles, Apostolos-Cappadona asks whether an image on a pyxis depicting the myrrhophores censing an altar presents "visual evidence for the scriptural identification of Mary Magdalene as not simply the first witness of the Resurrection but as apostle to the apostles and further as preacher/teacher/celebrant" (2005: 137–138). On the evidence of the *typikon* I submit that this is not the case. There is no evidence in the *typikon* for women serving as preachers, teachers or celebrants, but there is evidence for liturgical censing by women precisely as it is depicted in the iconography.

6.4 An ancient iconographic cycle preserved in Abyssinian art

Three Ethiopic Gospel books from the fourteenth century contain images in which two women are depicted on either side of the Holy Sepulchre, swinging censers, while an angel stands in the doorway of the tomb (fig. 5). One of these (B.2034 fol. 24r) is currently housed in the National Museum of Stockholm (description in Nordenfalk 1979: 17–21). The other (*Eth. 32* fol. 8r) is housed in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris (description of the MS in Zotenberg 1877: 24–29). Lepage (1987) adds to these a further manuscript, a Gospel book from the monastery at Debre Maʿar in the Gheralta region of the Tigray. The manuscripts are written in geʾez, the ancient literary language of the Abyssinian Christians. Both *Eth. 32* and the Debre Maᶜar manuscript identify the women as Mary and Martha. In the Stockholm manuscript only one of the two names—Mary—has been preserved. While the dates of these manuscripts places them well beyond the early Christian era, Lepage argues convincingly that the iconography of these manuscripts derives from a Greek prototype of the fifth to seventh century.[28] This conclusion was also reached by Heldman (1979), who suggested a sixth-century Palestinian prototype for *Eth. 32*, the Stockholm manuscript and the Debre Maʿar Gospel. Abyssinian art reveals a "persistent adherence to tradition, as a result of which it became a veritable museum of archaic compositions" (Buxton 1970: 136). If Lepage and Heldman are correct in their dating of the iconographic prototype for these manuscripts, this iconographic cycle is contemporary to the pilgrimage art from the sixth and seventh century and perhaps even earlier.

6.4.1 *Dating the iconography in the manuscripts*

Lepage provides a careful and detailed analysis of the canon tables and illuminations of *Eth. 32* and the Gospel book from Debre Maᶜar. Consistently his analysis suggests that the iconography derives from the fifth to seventh century. For example, he concludes that the decoration of the canon tables of both manuscripts derives from a prototype very close to the archetype ("très proche de l'archétype") created by Eusebius

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[28] A Greek prototype was also suggested for *Eth. 32* by Zotenberg (1877: 25) on the basis of the presence of Greek name forms, Greek words left untranslated and a number of *malentendus* only explicable on the basis of an originally Greek reading.

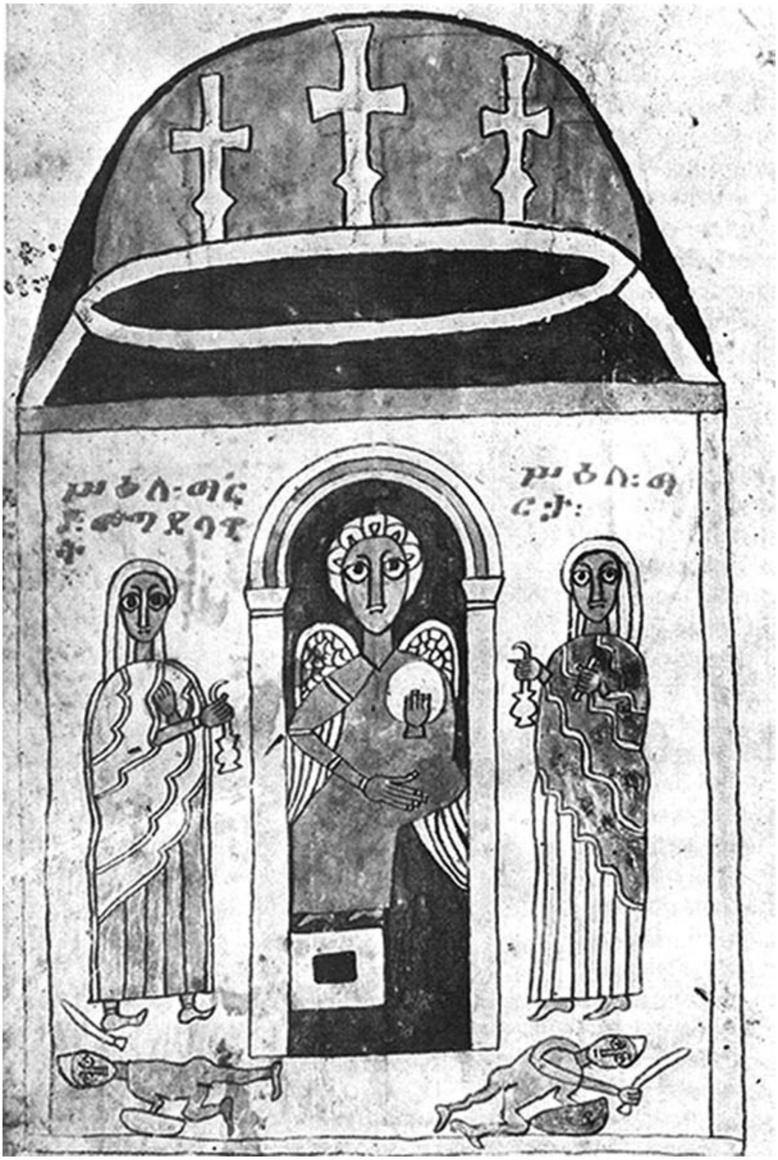
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Figure 5. Eth. 32 fol. 8r. Bibliotheque Nationale de France.

of Caesarea, in Palestine, in the second quarter of the fourth century (1987: 159). The number of sections corresponds to those seen in Greek manuscripts and the tables both contain a *tholos*.[29] They thus reveal a structure which Nordenfalk (1938) considered one of the two oldest Greek forms of the tables. The use of identical decorations for facing pages of the canon tables has likewise been identified by Nordenfalk as one of the characteristics of the Eusebian archetype, and this convention is observed in both manuscripts "avec une rigueur étonnante" (Lepage 1987: 160). Moreover the decorations used (peacocks, patterns of intersecting circles, crosses) are seen already in some of the earliest extant examples of the canon tables, including a Greek manuscript and four Armenian manuscripts (including the Etchmiadzin Gospels), all from the tenth century. The patterns of intersecting circles and crosses used in several canon arches is seen also in the Rabbula Gospels of 586 CE, which Leroy (1964: 197) has suggested derived from a Greek prototype.

The shape of the *tholos* (or 'fountain of life') on the last page of the canon tables also suggests an archaic prototype. In the Debre Maʿar manuscript the *tholos* has eight columns, resulting in a perspective that is much more realistic than that seen in many other manuscripts. Such *tholoi* with eight columns are seen only in very rare ancient manuscripts: the Godescalc lectionary from the late eighth century (Underwood 1950: fig. 25) and the Armenian MS 2555 of the library of the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem. Even rarer are features such as grilles and doors that appear between the columns of the *tholos* in the two Ethiopic manuscripts and which are found elsewhere only on the pilgrim's ampullae and on a rare Georgian manuscript (Lepage 1987: 161).[30]

Both manuscripts contain images of the evangelists in an iconographic form which was abandoned in the ninth century but which was common already in the sixth (Lepage 1987: 162–163) and three full-page miniatures: a crucifixion scene, the women at the tomb, and the enthronement, set as frontispiece in a manner comparable to the full-page miniatures of the Rabbula and Rossano Gospels. Noticeable in the crucifixions is the absence of Christ: the two robbers are represented, but the central cross is empty. Lepage (1987: 164–170) argues convincingly that this and many of the other details of the image are inherited from ancient Byzantine iconography. Certainly the images closely resemble the iconography of some of the Palestinian ampullae. The cross in the image of the Debre Maʿar manuscript is studded with gem stones, reflecting (so Heldman 1979: 113; Lepage 1987: 165) the monumental cross erected in the atrium of the church of the Holy Sepulchre by Theodosius II in the first half of the fifth century. Also striking are the backgrounds used in the images. *Eth 32* uses a blue background, a style known from the fifth century (Bréhier 1945). The manuscript from Debre Maʿar also uses a polychrome background, reflecting a style known from the fourth and fifth century which is seen, for example, in the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore, the Ashburnham Pentateuch and the Gospel book of St Augustine. Similarly the composition of the enthronement images matches the composition on the door of St Sabina (fifth century) and on an ampulla at Bobbio (Grabar 1958: pl. 53). The list of archaic features cited by Lepage could be extended; these examples suffice to support his claim that the iconography derives from an ancient Byzantine prototype.

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[29] This picture is also sometimes called 'The Fountain of Life.' It is described in detail by Underwood (1950).

[30] On the intimate connection between the Holy Sepulchre and the Fountain of Life see Underwood (1950).

6.4.2 *The Easter image in the manuscripts*

In the Easter image of *Eth. 32* two women appear to stand in front of the tomb, on either side of an arched doorway in which the angel can be seen sitting above a square that might represent the tomb or tombstone (fig. 5). The building has an arched dome and its outer edges also form the frame of the image. Two sleeping soldiers are depicted below the women. Above each woman is an inscription: "image of Mary Magdalen" on the left and "image of Martha" on the right (Lepage 1987: 170). The women carry objects in their right hands which could be censers. Martha also carries a scroll in her hand, which could be a sign of her virtue or possibly her chastity.[31] A superscription to the image reads, "the angel, giving the news to the women."

The image in the Debre Maʿar manuscript (Lepage 1987: 177 fig. 21) is similar in its arrangement, but much more detailed in its style. It is enclosed in a separate three-ribboned border and the two women consequently appear to be standing on either side of the tomb which is inscribed "tomb of our Saviour." Above the edifice the personifications of the sun and moon are placed in an orange sky. Two inscriptions above the image read, "the sun hiding its light" and "the moon turned to blood," while a third between them states "the angel announcing the news to the women" (Lepage 1987: 171). As in *Eth. 32* the stone of the tomb is depicted below the angel, though here it is shifted further to the right so that the angel appears to be sitting on it. Below to the right and left the two soldiers are depicted, inscribed "soldier who guards." In this image, too, the two myrrhophores are identified as Mary and Martha. Lepage identifies the Mary in the Debre Maʿar manuscript with the Theotokos (she wears a purple *maphorion*, as does the Theotokos in the Rabbula Gospels). The form of the name *Marya Magdalawit* is unusual in *Eth. 32*, which normally is rendered *Maryam*. Hence Lepage suggests that here, too, the model contained the Theotokos and that the copyist has corrected this 'error' but forgot to change the form of the name.

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[31] On early Christian art the scroll is an attribute of the philosopher. Smith notes that Susanna is often depicted with a scroll "as a sign of her wisdom and further proof of her chastity" and that this "became a standard feature of this iconography" (1993: 16).

The tradition of Martha as myrrhophore appears to be widespread in Ethiopia—Lepage adds two further manuscripts containing such images, the Gospel book of Debra Maryam (Buxton 1970: fig. 72) and the unpublished Gospel book of Degga Dešin (Lepage 1987: 193 n. 113), as well as an ancient Ethiopic hymn which contains the line, "celui qui a été crucifié au Golgotha est apparu à Marie et à Marthe" ("the one who was crucified on Golgotha has appeared to Mary and to Martha"; 1987: 179).

Despite the differences in technique, style and design, Lepage concludes that these images have a common iconographic archetype, though via different immediate models. Elements derived from early Christian art abound in the images, both in terms of style (as in the colour of the backgrounds) and in iconographic details. The personification of the sun and moon, for example, derives from pagan art of late antiquity and was adopted in early Christian art. The large cupola of the tomb resembles the depiction of the tomb in the Sancta Sanctorum reliquary of the fifth or sixth century. The nimbus of the angel in the Debre Maʿar manuscript, yellow with a light red border, forms an important link with works of the fourth century (Lepage 1987: 174). Both images show three crosses affixed to the roof, in identical form, and indeed in a form characteristic of crosses of the fifth- to seventh centuries. Lepage (1987: 172) proposes that they reproduce elements of actual architecture and decoration of the church of the Holy Sepulchre (so also Heldman 1979: 113, 115). The decoration of the architrave and the *acroteria* placed on it reflect a style of late antique and early Byzantine art.

Lepage concludes that the prototype for the images must be a Greek manuscript from Palestine or Antioch, based both on the presence of the Theotokos and the distribution of the women on either side of the tomb. The prototype of the crucifixion image, he suggests, was most likely created in Jerusalem, given its close similarity to the Palestinian ampullae. This makes it likely that the resurrection image, likewise, was created in Jerusalem. Heldman observes that the "painter or patron [was] well acquainted with the iconography of the *loca sancta*" (1979: 115). The name Martha most likely appeared in the prototype, for otherwise it must be explained how this name later found its way into the images. Indeed, precisely such a name in the prototype could explain the diffusion of the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore in Ethiopia. For Buxton suggests the remoteness of Abyssinia meant that

> the models on which [the] earliest painters depended for inspiration...were few and scarce. But the influence exerted by the few books that did somehow reach the country was, for this reason, all the greater....a single sacred picture striking the local imagination could give rise to a succession of more or less modified derivatives. (1970: 136)

Even more striking than the provenance of the source posited by Lepage for the iconography preserved in these manuscripts are his conclusions concerning the nature of this source:

> Ce court cycle de la Passion peut avoir été conçu pour un manuscript liturgique particulier, don't le ou les premiers exemplaires, executes avec soin, et somptuosité, ont servi de modèles à d'autres textes. Les themes du cycle court évoquent les ceremonies commemoratives principales du culte des Lieux Saints, à Jérusalem, sur les lieux de la Crucifixion et du Saint-Sépulcre. Le cycle court a pu être retenu pour l'illustration d'un Lectionnaire de la Semaine Sainte. (1987: 188)[32]

Lepage further postulates that the 'monumental character' of these miniatures suggests the possibility that these images reproduce monumental paintings from the walls of *martyria* of Jerusalem, a suggestion which had been made also for the iconography on the ampullae (Wessel 1966a: 140). Without reference to the *typikon* Lepage arrives at the same conclusion for the interpretation of the images which I had reached earlier in relation to the pilgrimage iconography. If, moreover, Lepage is correct in dating the cycle already as early as the fifth century, then these images fill the gap between Egeria's silence in the fourth century and the *typikon* in the ninth and lend further support to the hypothesis that the ritual of the myrrhophores developed in the fifth century or even before. They also add important evidence to support the hypothesis raised here, that the two myrrhophores in the Easter celebrations in Jerusalem were known as Martha and Mary.

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[32] "This short Passion cycle could have been conceived for a particular liturgical manuscript whose first exemplar or exemplars, carefully and sumptuously executed, served as models for other texts. The themes of the short cycle evoke the chief commemorative ceremonies of the cult of the holy sites in Jerusalem at the sites of the crucifixion and Holy Sepulchre. The short cycle could have been retained for the illustration of a Lectionary for Holy Week."

6.4.3 *A related image in Mozarabic art: Ashburton 17*

Similarities have been observed between Abyssinian and Mozarabic art (Buxton 1970: 136). This may explain why a closely related image appears in a Mozarabic manuscript from the tenth century now at the Medicean-Laurentian library in Florence which contains the writings of Ildefonse, archbishop of Toledo (died 677 CE). The image (Ashburton 17 fol. 57r) accompanies the treatise on the perpetual virginity of Mary and appears immediately after a citation of Lk 24:1–3. The tomb here lacks the characteristic three crosses seen in the Ethiopic gospel books, but the depiction of the dome matches the Stockholm manuscript. There is no doorway, nor an angel. Instead the empty sarcophagus (inscribed "sepulcrum") has taken its place. The inscription between the women reads: "Marta et Maria portantes aromata," "Martha and Mary carrying spices" (Grabar 1956: 18–20). Grabar connects this image closely with the third-century fresco at Dura Europos that represents the earliest extant depiction of the women at the tomb of Jesus. Be that as it may, the image is interesting, because the two women are carrying jars rather than censers. This is an intriguing deviation from the standard depictions. Unlike western manuscripts, which depict the ointment vessels as small vessels carried close to the chest, these jars have long necks by which the women hold them in front of them and a round shape with feet. Thus the shape and position of the vessels in this image more closely resembles the shape and position of censers than of ointment jars in other images. The transformation can be seen in a comparison of the image in the Debre Maʿar manuscript and *Eth. 32*. In the Debre Maʿar image the women are still clearly swinging censers. In *Eth. 32* the vessels are much smaller. They can be recognised as censers, but could easily be interpreted as unusually-shaped jars. In the Gospel book of Debra Maryam the women clearly carry jars (Buxton 1970: fig. 72).

6.5 Martha watching at the tomb of Jesus

One final image will be considered briefly. The image appears in a Greek Psalter, Mt Athos Pantokrator 61 fol. 112r. This manuscript is one of three illustrated Byzantine Psalters from the ninth century (description of the manuscript in Dufrenne 1966: 16). The image on fol. 112r depicts two women, labeled Μάρια καὶ Μάρθα, sitting by a tomb. The woman facing the tomb has her hand raised to her cheek in a gesture of mourning. The image illustrates Psalm 80 (LXX 79). On the basis of the inscription Dufrenne (1966: 30) suggests it depicts the wake at the tomb of Lazarus. This is implausible, however, given the shape of the tomb. A comparison with tombs depicted in other marginal illustrations in this manuscript reveals that the shape of the tomb matches the depiction of the tomb of Jesus (fol. 30v) but differs from the depiction of the tomb of Lazarus (fol. 29r; Dufrenne 1966: pls. 3, 12, 16).

Furthermore, the illuminations in this manuscript closely resemble the marginal illustrations of another ninth-century Psalter, the Chludoff Psalter at Moscow (Gr. 129; facsimile reproduction in Šcepkina 1977). On fol. 44r the same image is included also in the Chludoff Psalter in a context which makes it clear that the tomb in question is the tomb of Jesus, not the tomb of Lazarus (see also Grabar 1956: 16–17). The two women are labeled ΓΥΝΕΚΕΣ ΜΟΙΡΟΦΟΡΟΙ ("the women myrrhophores"), David appears beside the tomb, inscribed ΔΑΔ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΕΙ ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΕΩΣ ("David prophesies about the resurrection") and two soldiers (labeled ΣΤΡΑΤΙΩΤΑΙ) appear asleep in front of the tomb.

The wake at the tomb is recounted in Matthew: "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb" (27:61). The Mt Athos Psalter depicts the two women sitting opposite the tomb, but names them Mary and Martha. This is, to my knowledge, the only image which names Martha among the women watching at the tomb. Given the close association of the iconography to the liturgy, the naming of the women as "women myrrhophores" in the Chludoff Psalter probably reflects not only an association with the women watching at the tomb of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (27:61), but also (and perhaps more immediately) the liturgical celebration of the narrative and specifically the role of the myrrhophores, which, it will be recalled, included preparing the lamps on the day before Easter, and so was not limited to Easter morning. As such the myrrhophores of the *typikon* were also 'watching at the tomb.' The identification of the watching women as "Mary and Martha" in the Mt Athos manuscript and as "women myrrhophores" in the Chludoff Psalter fits the thesis proposed here, that these myrrhophores were known as Martha and Mary.

6.6 The myrrhophores in the liturgy of Constantinople

Evidence has been presented here to suggest that the Easter celebrations in Jerusalem included two myrrhophores who played an active part in the liturgy and, on the basis of iconographic evidence, that these two myrrhophores were known as Martha and Mary. Bertonière proposed that a similar group of myrrhophores existed in Constantinople (1972: 50 n. 108). His evidence for this is the account of Anthony of Novgorod, whose description of the myrrhophores who sing in Hagia Sophia was noted already (n. 23). Taft observes that the hagiopolite Easter celebrations left "unmistakable traces" in the holy week celebrations of Constantinople (1997: 67; see also pp. 81–82). Indeed, Hagia Sophia even contained a replica of the Sepulchre. This suggests that Constantinople replicated some of the practices of Jerusalem, including, it would seem, the liturgical participation of 'myrrhophores.'

There is evidence that the myrrhophores were known as Martha and Mary also in Constantinople. The Synaxarion of Constantinople lists June 6 as the "Feast of the Holy women myrrhophores, Mary and Martha" (Delehaye 1902: 734; Saxer 1958: 6).[33] Moreover, Severian of Gabala preached a sermon in Constantinople in 401 CE which names Martha and Mary as the women at the tomb (on the dating of the homily, see Carter 2000). The sermon was remarked in passing earlier for its depiction of Christ unclothed, but not naked, which matches an idea in Hippolytus' *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (see p. 108 n. 15).

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[33] Saxer (1958: 6 n. 10) prefers June 4 as the more original date attested in the oldest manuscripts. Neither Martha nor Mary of Bethany are listed among the myrrhophores celebrated on June 30 (Delehaye 1902: 789), which suggests that two different traditions have been preserved here.

> Peter, John and James came to the tomb, seeking the body, and did not find it. But they found the clothes rolled up that it might be shown that after the resurrection of Christ the old form of Adam is preserved in him and he became without clothes, not naked but clothed. Christ was raised, and put on the clothes which had clothed Adam and was naked, and the nakedness they did not see. After the resurrection the women saw the clothes that were thrown down. Martha and Mary saw him, recognised him, fell at his feet, and did not see him naked (Μάρθα καὶ Μαρία ὁρῶσιν αὐτὸν, γνορίζουσι, προσπίπτουσι, καὶ γυμνὸν οὐ βλέπουσι). (*de Creatione Mundi* 5.9; PG 56.483)

The naming of Martha appears without further comment. No significance is attached to her identity. The primary interest of Severian is in exploring the nature of the body after the resurrection. He loosely refers to ideas which appear in the canonical accounts, such as the women falling at the feet of Jesus (Mtt 28:9), the miraculous catch of fish (Jn 21:4–7) and Peter and John coming to the tomb and finding the clothes (Jn 20:5–6), but also adds James to those who came to the tomb and appears to be citing from memory, for only rarely does the wording of the homily match the canonical texts precisely. If the tradition of Martha and Mary as myrrhbearers is known and celebrated in Constantinople, as the Synaxarion attests, then such a naming of Martha can be expected in a context in which Gospel traditions are cited from memory rather than from the text. Since Severian is a native of Syria (Sozomen, *HE* 8.10), this reference might also reflect his familiarity with this tradition from Syria rather than Constantinople. Either way, it is striking that when Severian recalls the women who went to the tomb, it is Martha and Mary who spring to mind. That is significant because it suggests that Martha and Mary have become part of the standard version of the Easter story. (Perhaps Severian or his audience would be as surprised to discover that they are not named in the canonical Easter narratives as some modern Christians are surprised to discover that the ox and ass do not appear in the canonical Christmas narratives.) The date of this homily sets it a century or more before the extant iconography. It falls between the Hippolytean *Commentary* in the second century and the Easter hymn in the fifth.

6.7 Before the fourth century

I have reviewed a number of images that depict Martha at the tomb of Jesus and have suggested that the context for these images is the Easter celebrations at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The recurrence of the name Martha in these images renders plausible the suggestion that the myrrhophores in the Easter celebrations of Jerusalem were identified as Martha and Mary, and that this tradition spread with the pilgrimage trade to Jerusalem. It raises the question, however, whether it is possible to probe beyond the fourth century and the liturgical changes that resulted from the Constantinian building programme and the development of a culture of pilgrimage.[34] Were the women at the tomb depicted in earlier art and, if so, does the pre-Constantinian art reveal anything about the identification or interpretation of the women?

There is, to my knowledge, only one pre-Constantinian image that has been interpreted as showing the women at the tomb (so Grabar 1956; Villette 1957; Perkins 1973: 53), a fresco at Dura Europos which dates to around 240 CE. The interpretation of this image is disputed: Apostolos-Cappadona (2005) argues that the image depicts the wise and foolish virgins. There are no identifying inscriptions in the image. The next occurrence of the motif dates to around 400 CE and is located in the baptistery of San Giovanni in Fonte in Naples. Only fragments remain: part of an angel or messenger seated in front of a tomb and part of the head of a woman arriving from the left. There are also two depictions on sarcophagi, though in one instance it is uncertain whether the image is indeed the women at the tomb. A fragment of a sarcophagus in the Musee Granet in Aix-en-Provence shows part of the cross with meniscus-wreath and, below, remains of a figure seated in front of a tomb. This could be a wingless angel announcing the empty tomb to the myrrhophores who would have been depicted on the opposite side of the cross. A complete image of the women is preserved on a sarcophagus in the church of St Celso in Milan, dated to the second half of the fourth century. It will be recalled that the raising of Lazarus is a favourite motif on sarcophagi of the fourth century and appears regularly in the art of the catacombs. Consequently it may surprise how rarely the story of the empty tomb is depicted since, as Baumstark (1923) suggests, it might have offered an obvious symbol embodying the hope of resurrection.[35] Indeed Baumstark proposes, on the basis of the St Celso sarcophagus, that there were earlier depictions of the women at the tomb, now lost.

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[34] The praxis of pilgrimage to Jerusalem developed in the fourth century (Engemann 1995a: 26; with older literature). Prior to this journeys to the Holy Land were not undertaken with the same motivation of praying at holy sites. Dix has suggested that there was also a significant change in the *ethos* of the liturgy in the fourth century, a shift "from eschatology to historicization" (Baldovin 1989: 34; see also Dix 1945: 303–319, 348–351; Taft 1984: 15). For a critique see Baldovin (1987: 231–234).

There are two main reasons offered by Baumstark (1923) for supposing that the (post-Constantinian) image of the sarcophagus at St Celso preserves earlier, pre-Constantinian iconography. First, he suggests the form of the tomb does not reflect the Anastasis chapel built by Constantine at the site of the tomb in Jerusalem and therefore reflects an image deriving from a time in which this monument had not yet been built. Second, Baumstark observes that all the later depictions of this scene place the tomb at the centre, with the angel seated to the right and two women arriving from the left. The image on the sarcophagus at St Celso, however, places the angel between the women and the tomb. Moreover, the angel appears out of place, squeezed into the image above the women. Not only does this arrangement thus differ from the typical iconography, but it appears as if an angel has been inserted into an image that originally contained only the women and the tomb. According to Baumstark such a simple image is difficult to conceive as a creation of the post-Constantinian era.

While Baumstark's proposal is intriguing it has several weak points. It is based on the supposition that one might expect such an image of the women at the tomb given the funerary context of much early Christian art and the interest in depicting the hope of the resurrection in such a context. It is well-known, however, that non-symbolic depictions of the crucifixion are similarly late. The earliest extant depictions of the crucifixion are a wood carving in the door of St Sabina in Rome and an ivory in the British museum, both dated to the fifth century (Wessel 1966c: 10; Harley 1999). On what basis should it be expected that the Easter narratives were depicted sooner than the passion narratives? Perhaps one ought rather to be searching for symbolic depictions of the resurrection in the earlier art and these are certainly not lacking. Why should one suppose, as does Baumstark, that the resurrection of Christ is the most obvious symbol for the resurrection of the faithful? Much as Paul might find the hope of his own resurrection in the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:12–20), others might find it easier to base their hope of their own resurrection on the raising of Lazarus or the rescue of Jonah. Thus there is probably less reason to suppose *a priori* that one 'ought' to find depictions of the Easter narratives in early Christian art than Baumstark suggests.

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[35] Villette calls the image of the myrrhophores "la représentation ordinaire de la Résurrection" (1957: 60).

What then of the unusual features of the depiction in the St Celso sarcophagus? Here the question is to what extent the arrangement and depiction of the tomb are as unusual as Baumstark suggests. There is in fact another very similar image found on the fifth-century *Capsella of Saints Quirica and Giulitta* in the Museo Archievesco at Ravenna (Bartoccini 1930). This marble box originally contained reliquaries and is much smaller than a sarcophagus (its dimensions are listed as 50/51 × 37.5 × 20.5cm). It depicts motifs extremely popular in early Christian art: the 'Traditio legis' and Daniel in the lion's den on the two short sides and the adoration of the Magi and the myrrhophores on the two longer sides.

Just like the sarcophagus at St Celso in Milan, the reliquary box does not depict the tomb in the typical form of the Anastasis chapel of Constantine. Again, the angel is placed between the women and the tomb, though in this case a full figure is depicted, unlike the St Celso sarcophagus which shows only an upper torso. If one were to contract this image on the *capsella*, one would arrive at the same compositional arrangement as on the St Celso sarcophagus. Consequently, whereas Baumstark hypothesised that an angel was inserted into an earlier form of the image which contained only the women and the tomb, one might also guess that the sarcophagus at St Celso contracted a form of the image which placed the angel between the women and the tomb in a composition similar to that found on the reliquary box in Ravenna. This, in turn, removes the other key argument of Baumstark for supposing a pre-Constantinian form of the image, for it no longer requires one to suppose that the model for the sarcophagus at St Celso included only the women and the tomb.

Baumstark's other suggestion, that there was a fixed and standard depiction of the women at the tomb which consistently placed the tomb in the centre, with the women coming from the left and the angel seated to the right, is incorrect at least for the earliest extant art. The fourth-century sarcophagus from Aix-en-Provence depicts the angel seated in front of the tomb. The Ravenna *capsella* likewise places the tomb at the far right. Apart from this *capsella* there are only four other extant depictions of the women at the tomb from the fifth century: the doors of St Sabina in Rome and three ivories: a plaque now in Munich, a casket in the British museum in London and the Trivulzio ivory at

Milan. None of these show the pattern proposed by Baumstark. In the Milan and Munich ivories the women arrive from the right and the angel appears seated in front of the tomb, while the third ivory places one woman on either side of the tomb and omits the angel entirely. The doors of St Sabina show the women arriving from the right and the angel seated on the left. The 'standard' form of the arrangement of women, angel and tomb which Baumstark proposes thus does not appear until the sixth century. One might add also the mosaic from St Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna, dating from the sixth century, in which the tomb is indeed placed in the centre, but the women arrive from the right and the angel is seated on the left.

Finally, what of the depiction of the tomb? The simple round shape on the two fourth-century sarcophagi certainly differs from the typical form which appears later, for example on the three ivories and on the Palestinian ampullae. It could therefore preserve an earlier, pre-Constantinian type. Yet the two ninth-century Psalters, Athos Pantokrator 61 and the Chludoff Psalter (Moscow gr. 129), which have already been discussed, also depict the tomb of Jesus in the form seen on the St Celso sarcophagus. Thus the depiction of the tomb of Jesus is by no means consistent after the building of the Constantinian monument. The shape of the tomb by itself would therefore seem to be insufficient grounds for proposing a pre-Constantinian form of the image.[36] At best it might be grounds for arguing that the earliest depictions do not reflect the Constantinian monument. The fact remains that these earliest extant depictions do derive almost exclusively from the Constantinian era, while the only pre-Constantinian example (the fresco at Dura Europos) is too fragmentary to draw certain conclusions about the existence, typical form, or popularity of the motif in pre-Constantinian art. It is therefore difficult to support with any confidence Baumstark's hypothesis about a pre-Constantinian form of the depiction of the myrrhophores.

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[36] Baumstark proposes on the same grounds that the image of the myrrhophores in *Syr. 33* preserves a pre-Constantinian type, but this suggestion must likewise be rejected (so also Leroy 1964: 205).

6.8 Conclusions

It is worth reviewing the evidence. There are seven images which explicitly name Martha as one of the myrrhophores (*Syr. 33*, the Egyptian amulet, *Eth. 32*, the Gospel books of Debre Maʿar, Debra Maryam and Degga Dešlin and Ashburton 17).[37] A further manuscript, the Ethiopic Gospel book now at Stockholm, is missing the name, rendering it impossible to know whether Martha was also named here, while the Mt Athos Psalter names Martha as one of the women watching at the tomb. Two of these images, *Syr. 33* and the amulet, derive from the sixth century (or possibly the seventh century in the case of the amulet), while the iconographic cycle preserved in the later manuscripts has been dated to the fifth to seventh centuries.

There are many more images of the women at the tomb on pilgrimage art of the sixth and seventh century which do not identify the women by name. Significantly the names 'Mary Magdalene and Mary' appear even less frequently on such art than the name Martha. The only occurrence I have been able to locate which could date as early as the images in *Syr. 33* and the amulet is an image on an engraved plate from Syria which depicts the women at the tomb and names them Mary Magdalene and Mary (Leroy 1964: 60–62; see also Rice 1963: 43 fig. 31). The plate has been dated to the sixth or seventh century (Bréhier 1920: 192).[38] As such the appearance of the name Martha is by no means the exception in the extant art; the appearance of the name Mary Magdalene is even rarer. This raises the question of the identity of the myrrhophores on other pilgrimage art of the sixth and seventh centuries. Is this art to be interpreted on the basis of canonical texts, or do the labels in *Syr. 33* and on the Egyptian amulet serve as better indicators of the identity of these unnamed women? In that case the number of images that depict Martha at the tomb of Jesus would expand exponentially.

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[37] No significance has been attached here to the order of the names because, unlike literary texts in which the order of names can be clearly established, order is less clear in images, and perhaps less relevant. If Martha stands on the left-hand side of the tomb and therefore appears 'first' to those who read left to right, is she named first and does that imply an order of priority? Or is the right side of the tomb more significant as a place of honour? In the Egyptian amulet the names are inscribed into the space between the women and the edge. The name Mary appears first, but the name Martha appears closer to the leading woman, so does the inscription intend to list Mary as leader or Martha? Or is it not interested in the order of the women at all?

[38] Besides this plate the earliest appearance of the name Mary Magdalene for one of the myrrhophores in iconography appears to be an ivory casket of the tenth to twelfth century on which a depiction of the women at the tomb has been engraved with a Greek inscription "Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen" (Hanson 1998). The legend "Marie et Marie de bon matin au tombeau" appears in an Easter image in a Syriac manuscript of 1221 (St Marc des Syriens 6 fol. 130v; Leroy 1964: 315; album 101 fig. 4). From the eleventh century the canonical names appear in monumental art.

I broached at the outset the question of determining the appropriate texts for interpreting images. In this case the presupposition that these images depict canonical texts is rendered difficult by two key differences from the canonical texts: the images depict the women carrying censers, rather than spice jars, with which they incense the tomb, and they depict the tomb of Jesus in a form resembling the Constantinian basilica rather than the rock-hewn grave of the canonical accounts. Since the art is linked to pilgrimages to the holy sites of Jerusalem it is hardly surprising that the iconography should reflect the liturgical buildings and practices of the church of Jerusalem, in this case particularly its Easter observances.[39] These features reflect the liturgical Easter celebrations in Jerusalem. As such it is not the canonical narratives *per se* but rather the narratives as they are reflected in the hagiopolite liturgy which seem to underlie these images. These images are by no means unique in this: Onasch (1958) demonstrates a similar relationship between the liturgy and iconography of Christmas.

The extant liturgical texts from Jerusalem (in particular the *typikon*) do not name the myrrhophores. However, the close similarity of the ritual of the myrrhophores to the iconography particularly in the manuscripts from Abyssinia suggests that these myrrhophores were known as Martha and Mary, for the name Martha appears consistently in these images. If Lepage (1987) is correct in his hypothesis that these images derive from monumental art of Jerusalem, then it is possible that Martha was already named on this monumental art. That would certainly explain the appearance of her name in the iconography. Furthermore, since the hagiopolite liturgy—and specifically the ritual of the myrrhophores—enacts the Matthean Easter narrative, the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore appears here to be an interpretation of the Matthean account. The same canonical basis for the tradition was already observed in the analysis of the Easter hymn in the previous chapter.

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[39] This is the case at least for the post-Constantinian images which depict the Anastasis rotunda. Since there is only one extant pre-Constantinian image, it is difficult to say whether the origins of the image *per se* are to be sought in the liturgy.

Finally, the images are all linked to Eastern rather than Western Christianity. Martha appears in iconography thought to have a Palestinian or Syrian origin. While

> the liturgical usages of the Holy City also spread throughout Christendom with the pilgrim trade, leaving unmistakable traces especially in the calendar, lectionary, and Holy Week services of East and West, (Taft 1997: 67)

the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore does not appear in western liturgical texts. The popularity of replicating the Jerusalem liturgy is attested by a number of replicas of the Holy Sepulchre in western churches, for example at Aquileia and Gernrode. These replicas and the Latin Passion plays associated with them have been discussed at length (Heales 1869; Young 1933; Smoldon 1946; Boor 1967; Sticca 1970; Lipphardt 1972; 1975–90). The Passion plays developed out of tropes added to the Easter services, in particular the famous *Quem queritis* trope. Initially integrated into the liturgy, these Easter plays eventually came to be separated from the liturgical celebrations and develop into free-standing plays. Martha does not appear either in the plays or in the early tropes. Thus, as in the case of the texts discussed previously, the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore remains an eastern tradition and, with the exception of the Ambrosian Missal, does not find its way into western (Latin) traditions.

In the East, however, the tradition appears to be widespread, given the sizeable body of evidence for it in sermons, in images, in liturgy and hymnody. Indeed, the naming of Martha in the Easter narrative appears nonchalantly and without any apparent awareness of disjuncture with canonical texts. The comparison with the ox and ass in the Christmas narrative was drawn earlier and seems an apt parallel. Ox and ass ‘belong’ to Christmas and are a standard feature of the story as it is told, celebrated and painted. There is a biblical basis for this association (Isa 1:3)—but it is not found in the canonical Christmas narratives of Matthew and Luke, a fact that might be news to many who have heard and read the biblical narratives repeatedly. The story is so well-known—and ox and ass such a familiar part of the story—that their non-appearance in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew can easily escape notice. Perhaps some early Christians would have been just as surprised to discover that Martha is not named in the canonical Easter narratives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MARTHA, *DIAKONIA* AND THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

It was noted at the outset that in early Christian traditions Martha appears almost exclusively in two settings: at tomb or table. I have explored the tomb traditions and demonstrated that alongside the narrative of the raising of Lazarus there existed a very early tradition which included Martha as myrrhophore and apostle of the resurrection, a tradition which persisted in the preaching, liturgy and iconography of the churches of the East. It is time to turn to traditions which place Martha 'at the table.' One defining characteristic of Martha traditions is her frequent connection to διακονία (service). This connection appears both in Luke and John, as well as in three later texts, the *Apostolic Church Order*, the *Acts of Philip* and the *Manichean Psalmbook*.

The consistent connection of Martha to διακονία in the New Testament (Lk 10:38–42; Jn 12:2) has been used to argue that the texts retain the historical memory of a woman remembered as Martha the διάκονος (D'Angelo 1990b). Others have countered that this consistency attests no more than that the author of John was familiar with the Gospel of Luke (for example Thyen 1992a). The post-canonical texts reveal that, whatever the source of the tradition of Martha as 'serving one,' it is persistent. Moreover, it is not merely that 'serving' appears as one of many traits of Martha, nor that Martha is merely one woman among many who is said to be 'serving.' Rather, διακονία appears as a hallmark characteristic linked to Martha in early Christian tradition. Besides the tomb traditions that have already been surveyed, the texts cited above represent a majority of the canonical and non-canonical references to Martha (apart from commentaries upon the canonical texts and a handful of references to Martha in lists of disciples that are examined in chapter nine). In some cases at least, this connection to διακονία is used polemically. This is most apparent in the *Apostolic Church Order* (*ACO*), which also reveals most clearly that it is the combination of women and διακονία which is contentious. Indeed, precisely the combination of women and διακονία has been contentious also in the interpretation of Luke 10:38–42. As a matter of prolegomena to examining the traditions in detail, more needs to be said, therefore, about the meaning of διακονία/διακονεῖν. For the significant loading of these terms, combined with persistent misconceptions about their meaning, has resulted in widely divergent interpretations of the canonical Martha texts, and particularly the Lukan pericope.

7.1 THE MEANING OF *διακονία* IN EARLY CHRISTIAN TEXTS

7.1.1 *The interpretation of Beyer*

Beyer's (1935) article in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* was, until recently, the standard interpretation of διακονία in New Testament exegesis. Beyer asserted that the fundamental meaning of διακονέω is to serve at table (though later extended to cover a broader range of acts of service—"für den Lebensunterhalt sorgen"; Beyer 1935: 81), but that the word took on a completely new and unprecedented meaning in Christian discourse to become a technical term for Christian service of the neighbour. This change in meaning is derived particularly from a *logion* of Jesus, who announced the coming of the Son of Man as one "not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45).[1] Its connection with the theme of reversal in the previous verses (10:42–44) has led to the standard reading of διακονία as 'lowly service' and 'loving service,' connected in particular to the self-giving of Christ on the cross. Διακονία is thus understood as practical service of the neighbour, service offered in humility and love (e.g., Schweizer 1961; McCord and Parker 1966; Bangerter 1971; Barnett 1981; Weiser 1990). Where Paul speaks of himself in this way (1 Cor 3:5; Col 1:23, 25) it is a mark of his humility and self-giving service of others. It has been claimed, moreover, that in its choice of διακονία and its cognates "the New Testament throughout and uniformly chooses a word that is entirely unbiblical and non-religious and never includes association with a particular dignity or position" (Schweizer 1961: 174).

This standard interpretation has come under repeated criticism (Georgi 1964; Aalen 1984; Collins 1990; Carter 1996) and has been shown to be incorrect on several fronts: in early Christian discourse διακονία is neither a synonym for love, nor is it directed at the neighbour. Aalen (1984) demonstrates that, with the exception of Romans 13:4, διακονία and its cognates always refer to service *within* the church, service of Christian sisters and brothers, rather than service of the 'neighbour' in a broader sense. Hence διακονία is an ecclesiological term ("eine ekklesiologische Erscheinung…eher als eine ethische"; Aalen 1984: 6). Furthermore John N. Collins' (1990) extensive study of the word reveals that it is not a Christian innovation, but rather a word already circulating in Jewish and Hellenistic circles with quite a similar meaning to that with which it was invested in the early Christian writings.

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[1] See, for example, Roloff (1972–73), who sees in this verse the turning point from the use of the word with its Hellenistic meaning of serving at table, to a technical term.

7.1.2 *The interpretation of Collins*

John N Collins (1990) argues that the word διακονεῖν and its cognates (διακονία, διάκονος) had a range of meanings, many of which are fundamentally related to intermediary activity, either between humans or between humans and the divine—be it in matters of relating a message, as an agent for another, or as an attendant (the traditional 'servant'). He notes various etymologies of the word that connect it particularly to speed, for example deriving it from ἐγκονεῖν ("to hurry") or διώκειν ("to run"; Collins 1990: 89–90), an association retained both in the sense of 'envoy' and when the word is used for servants, where—in distinction to the ὑπηρέτης—it more typically denotes the servant 'on the move' (1990: 125). While traditional interpretation understood διακονία as essentially referring to table service, the word is actually rare in such contexts; moreover the participle form (οἱ διακονοῦντες) is more common than the noun (οἱ διάκονοι) for waiters. The word had a home particularly in religious settings—not only in terms of the mediation of diviners, but also within meal settings.

> The ideals of fellowship enshrined in Lucian, Plutarch, and Athenaeus could not be stated so highly without the explicit acknowledgement of the presence of the gods…[whose] presence made every public festival, or, at will, any private dinner party the occasion of religious observance and celebration. (1990: 161)

Even before their adoption in Christian discourse, the words διακονεῖν, διακονία and διάκονος had a religious colouring and they served Christian writers such as Paul in emphasising not their humility and servant status, but their authenticity as mediators of the divine word and commissioned agents of God (e.g., Rom 11:13; 1 Cor 3:6; see Collins 1990: 195–234).

> The words speak of a mode of activity rather than of the status of the person performing the activity. Thus they are not expressing notions of lowliness or servitude, nor in Christian usage did the idea of doing a benevolent action accrue to the idea of ministering. (1990: 335)

The rarity of the words in the papyri suggests they were literary rather than vernacular terms (Moulton and Milligan 1952: 149; Collins 1990: 177–191), leading Collins to conclude that "the words…did not have an ordinary or unadorned meaning" (ibid.: 336). This observation alone should caution against presupposing an 'ordinary or unadorned meaning' for διακονία in Luke 10:38–42, let alone assuming that such an 'ordinary and unadorned meaning' involves table service.

Collins concludes from his extensive survey of the literature that

> Christian usage [of διακονεῖν, διακονία, διὰκονος] is indistinguishable from non-Christian except in the instance of the designation 'deacon'…Christians used the words because of their currency in religious, ethical, and philosophical discourse…. In Christian sources the words refer mainly to:
>
> i. message from heaven;
> ii. message between churches;
> iii. commissions within a church.
>
> …Examination of usage in Paul and Acts establishes that 'ministry of the word' is a prerogative of the apostle and of those whom the apostle commissions…. Paul's conviction that 'ministering the word' is to expose the hearer to the immediacy of God's revelatory and reconciling activity is at times explicit and is basic to his exposition of apostleship by means of these terms…. Whether the words apply to message or to another type of commission, they necessarily convey the idea of mandated authority from God, apostle, or church…. Thus the main reference in Christian literature is to 'ministry under God,' and the notion of 'service to fellow human beings' as a benevolent activity does not enter…. The designation 'deacon' does not derive from attendance at table but from attendance on a person…. This person is not the needy person or the congregation or community but the episkopos (the later 'bishop'), whose 'agent' the 'deacon' is…. The word was chosen as a title of this Christian officer because the word had currency in religious language…. The title is not derived directly from non-Christian religious guilds, in which this common noun designated ceremonial 'waiters,' but is an original Christian designation for an 'agent in sacred affairs.'…The title probably originated in cult. (ibid.: 336–337)

7.1.3 *Gender and διακονία*

Collins' conclusions on the meaning of διακονία as a literary term with religious loading should warn against attributing no deeper meaning to the word than preparing and serving a meal when it occurs in texts such as Luke 10:38–42. Yet traditional readings have been subject to a gender bias which more readily attributes to women's διακονία a meaning related to table service and to men's διακονία a meaning related to commissioned sending. Martimort's (1986) survey of deaconesses in the early Church, for example, allows as evidence for women's διακονία only such texts which explicitly mention women deacons and goes to great lengths to show that even where women deacons are mentioned, their status and function is either not to be understood as referring to an office, or is in no way comparable to that of male deacons. A number of other examples of such gendered exegesis of διακονία are critiqued by Schottroff (1995: 218–220). This gender bias is seen at times also within scholarship with specifically gendered interests, so for example Via (1985), Seim (1994a: 121) and Corley (1993: 120–121).[2]

Conversely, Schüssler Fiorenza (1983: 43–48) and Eisen (1996: 15–18) argue for an inclusive reading strategy. On the basis that androcentric language subsumes 'woman' under the generic epithet 'man/mankind' and uses grammatically masculine language not only for exclusively male groups but also for mixed groups, while grammatically feminine language is used only for exclusively female groups, masculine language ought to be read inclusively as referring to mixed groups unless it is explicitly clear that women are excluded. Such an inclusive reading strategy is typically followed by exegetes when the text speaks of the community using exclusive terms (by addressing the readers as 'brothers,' for example), but is often not followed in the interpretation of leadership titles such as 'apostle,' 'prophet' or 'teacher,' where it is assumed that the text refers only to men. Even when the text uses leadership titles in reference to women (Rom 16:1, 7) the traditional gender-biased reading strategy tends to explain these away in a curious circular argument that these terms cannot mean what they appear to mean, because women did not hold such offices or leadership roles. Such an *a priori* assumption against women office bearers can no longer be maintained in the light of the increasing numbers of studies collating the literary and epigraphic evidence for women leaders in synagogue (Brooten 1982; Horst 1991; Horbury 1999), church (most importantly Eisen 1996; but see also Irvin 1980; Irwin 1984; Richardson 1986; Mayer 1999; Hofman 2000) and Greco-Roman society (Trebilco 1991; Rogers 1992; Cotter 1994; Tilborg 1996).

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[2] Seim's assertion that titles assigned to women were "honourable" and that such women "had seldom any official and direct political role to play" (1994a: 121) is surprising given that she elsewhere cites Brooten (1982; Seim 1994a: 43 n. 56) who argues precisely the converse in her analysis of the epigraphical evidence for women leaders in Judaism. She seems to assume that Brooten's work is valid primarily for Egypt and Asia Minor (Seim 1994a: 121 n. 76), a position which is supported by Trebilco (1991) but not by Horst (1991: 108) who suggests that such leadership positions are not a local idiosyncrasy.

The fact that it is precisely Collins—whose scholarship on the meaning of διακονία I have just cited extensively—who nevertheless pursues a gender-biased reading strategy is unfortunate, particularly in this instance, since the interest here is specifically in the διακονία of a woman. Against Schüssler Fiorenza's exegesis of διακονία in Luke 10:38–42 (see 7.2.2 below), Collins claims that

> the reason the words [διακονία and διακονεῖν] apply to women in three instances in the Gospel [of Luke] is simply that the narrative requires appropriate words for attendance upon guests or master; on the other hand, they apply to men in the public roles of mission and proclamation in Acts (and in Paul) because the words properly designate such activities, especially as these are of a religious character. The two applications owe nothing to Luke's estimations of women vis-à-vis men, provide no evidence of bias against women, and arise simply because of Luke's competence in the Greek language. Any bias discernible in the narratives was inherent in the sociological conditions of the period, an aspect readily acknowledged by Seim (123–124). The simple fact is that mission and proclamation were activities carried out basically by men. (1998: 110)

He fails to convince on this point because he fails to mention, much less counter, the epigraphic and literary evidence for women's leadership noted earlier. In view of this evidence it would seem by no means to be a 'simple fact' that 'mission and proclamation were activities carried out basically by men.' Indeed while Collins (1998: 108–109) critiques Schottroff's (1995: 205–218) analysis of the meaning of διακονία for associating it with the manual labour of slaves, he ignores her critique of the gendered interpretations which apply one meaning to διακονία in relation to women and another to men. His critique of the feminist reading of the Lukan narrative focuses predominantly on the absence of any reference to his own philological work on the term in the work of the scholars he criticises. 'What we are dealing with in regard to table and apostolate,' asserts Collins, 'are two distinct usages, both current in

Greek since centuries before the Christian era' (1998: 109). That may be so. The question remains, however, which of the two usages applies in the case of Martha's *diakonia*. Collins rightly suggests that 'the referent [of *diakonia*] can be determined only within each particular context' (ibid.: 110). It seems readily apparent to Collins that

> coming to the passage in this light, the reader recognizes that in the story of Martha and Mary the ancient writer is sketching a scene of a guest in the house of two women, one of whom is busying herself with delivering the courses of a meal...and the other of whom is seated at the distinguished guest's feet listening to what he has to say. Luke's words are plain. It is the scene that has to be interpreted, not the words. The scene is not and never was about ecclesial ministry. (ibid.)

On what basis this interpretation of *diakonia* as table service rather than ecclesial ministry is so readily apparent is not specified by Collins. Nor does Collins explore whether it would be possible to read *diakonia* with reference to apostolic service. Collins aims to present 'linguistic reasons that preclude the possibility of any such reading' (ibid.: 104). Yet his argument proceeds no further than to identify two distinct meanings for *diakonia* and then to assert that *diakonia* denotes table service. Are we to assume that since this meaning fits the context, the other is necessarily precluded?

Also surprising is that Collins' (1990) monograph of over 300 pages—intended specifically to elucidate the meaning of διακονία and its cognates in early Christian discourse—covers all four Gospels in a mere seven pages at the conclusion of the book (though two important passages from the Gospel of Mark are also covered in more detail earlier). It is hardly surprising, then, that Collins fails to convince, for example when he commences his discussion of διακονία in the Gospels with the programmatic statement that "the words under discussion mainly designate menial attendance of one kind or another" (1990: 245), despite concluding that the word "does not have an unadorned meaning" and was picked up in Christian discourse because of its specific religious association (1990: 336).[3] Consequently, while Collins' work is important for its contribution to the interpretation of διακονία, it is at the same time insufficient for evaluating the Gospels and particularly the διακονία of women.

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[3] Collins similarly fails to convince Karris (1994: 8 n. 21) and Koperski (2002: 192).

Gendered interpretations of διακονία can arise from modern gender stereotypes and from the close connection of διακονία with ministry and the need to justify modern ministry structures with recourse to what did (or did not) happen in the early Church. More significantly, they highlight competing frameworks for conceptualising the early Church. The difficulty of using texts as 'windows' onto the ancient world has already been noted (see 1.3.1). Much meaning must be inferred by filling in the gaps, and in this instance it makes a great deal of difference how these gaps are filled. Scholars who conceptualise houses as patriarchal institutions which contain women in separate women's quarters (e.g., Seim 1994a) interpret women's διακονία differently to those who conceptualise the house as a sphere in which women had relatively more power and equality (e.g., Schüssler Fiorenza 1983).[4] The putative background against which the word is read makes all the difference. Cotter (1994) has shown both that the cities in which the Pauline communities were located were highly Romanised and that Luke-Acts assumes more Roman than Greek attitudes in its portrayal of women. Roman women were far freer to move outside the home than Greek women and regularly dined with their husbands, unlike their Greek counterparts. Hence in this instance it makes a great deal of difference whether one reads Luke-Acts on the assumption of Greek or Roman cultural mores (see also LiDonnici 1999). The same issue applies with regard to the Jewish cultural background to the texts. At times the interpretation of Luke 10:38–42 invokes this cultural background, reading the praxis of Jesus over against it. The difficulties of establishing this putative Jewish background, particularly as far as women are concerned, has been amply discussed by Brooten (1981; 1985), Ilan (1997) and Kraemer (1999a; 1999b).

Thus the many judgments that are (and must be) made in the process of exegeting the text from a socio-historical perspective determine its interpretation. The ways in which the gaps are filled, that is, the context which is inferred for 'houses,' 'women,' 'women's work' and so on, makes all the difference. This not only explains the competing interpretations for Martha's διακονία in the New Testament, but is also an important feature to note, given that the texts are not merely historical notices but are traditions carried, interpreted and transformed over long periods of time. It is not only modern interpreters who determine referent and meaning of the words in the texts by filling the gaps, but ancient interpreters who do likewise. Even if it were possible to determine with some degree of certainty 'the' meaning of a text at a fixed point in time ('what the author meant'), it would neither preclude nor explain the many other meanings that have been imputed to the same words in the same story over the centuries. The flow of the tradition—the history of interpretation of a given text about Martha—is as interesting in this case as any putative original meaning or authorial intent. This has already been observed in relation to the interpretation of Martha in John 11. Here it is the flexibility particularly of διακονία—the many different meanings which can be attributed to the word—which makes the stories about Martha's διακονία rhetorically pliable and hence useful for a range of situations. As will become apparent, the Lukan narrative has been subject to a wide range of interpretations and re-interpretations.

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[4] On the connection of the house to women's participation in religious ritual see also Schroer (2002).

7.2 THE MODERN DEBATE OVER THE INTERPRETATION OF LUKE 10:38–42

7.2.1 *Martha in the kitchen*

The traditional reading of Luke 10:38–42 assumes that the setting of this story is domestic, more specifically that its setting is a meal. As Jesus travels, he visits Martha and Mary. Mary sits listening to Jesus. Martha, meanwhile, is imagined to be fussing in the kitchen, distracted by 'much serving' (πολλὴν διακονίαν). Martha complains that Mary has left her to prepare the meal on her own and should help. Jesus' response critiques Martha's over-extravagance in preparing many dishes when few (or even one) would have sufficed and/or her attitude of worrying about such matters, instead of listening to the word. This line of interpretation has wide currency in modern scholarship (for example, Laland 1959; Marshall 1978; Davidson 1982/83; Via 1985; Jones 1992; Schürmann 1994; Tannehill 1996; Collins 1998; Bieberstein 1998; Spiller 2001). Those who emphasise historical interpretations of the text suggest that the original *Sitz im Leben* of the story was the itinerant missionary movement and emerging hospitality codes for this movement (Laland 1959; Seim 1994a; Bieberstein 1998), or interpret it as a radical affirmation of women's right to discipleship and learning over against traditional women's roles (for example, Witherington and Witherington

1990). More nuanced is the reading of North (1997) who considers it a story about a meal with a subtext about discipleship.

There are some inconsistencies in the text which are usually left unexplained in this line of interpretation. Most glaring of these is the absence of the typical Lukan meal language. Luke's meal scenes usually contain explicit reference to the act of eating: ἐσθίω (φαγεῖν) *and* πίνω occur in almost every meal scene (e.g., 5:30; 7:36; 9:13, 17; 10:7; 12:45; 13:26; 14:1, 15; 15:2, 23; 22:30; 24:43). Besides these there are usually references to reclining (κατάκειμαι, 5:29; 7:37; ἀνάκειμαι, 22:27; κατακλίνω, 9:14; 14:18; ἀνακλίνω, 12:37; 13:29; ἀναπίπτω, 14:10; 22:14); to the act of inviting or the invited ones (typically using καλέω, e.g., 7:39; 14:8–13; but also ἐρωτάω, 7:36; 11:37); to the meal itself (δοχή, 5:28; 14:13; ἄριστον, 11:38; 14:12; δεῖπνον, 14:12; πάσχα, 22:11); to foods consumed (especially ἄρτος, 9:13; 14:1, 15; 22:19; 24:30; but also ἰχθύς, 9:13; 24:42; βρῶμα, 9:13; σιτομέτριον, 12:42; μόσχος σιτευτός, 15:23, ἔριφος, 15:29) and to meal utensils or furniture (ποτήριον, 11:39; πίναξ, 11:39; πρωτοκλισία, 14:8; τράπεζα, 16:21).

In other contexts Luke appears to be assiduously avoiding the use of meal language. In the narrative of Zacchaeus (19:1–10) μένω and καταλύω are used where one might expect an explicit reference to eating and/or reclining (compare 19:5, 7 with 5:30 and 15:1–2). Similarly, meal terminology is conspicuously absent from Luke 10:38–42 and, significantly, from the two previous texts linking διακονία with women (4:38–39; 8:1–3). The only common linguistic link between these three texts and the frequent meal scenes is the use of διακονία/διακονεῖν. However, these words are by no means the only (or even typical) words used for servants in a meal setting. The one who gives the allotted portion (σιτομέτριον) in 12:42 is the οἰκονόμος; the δοῦλος is sent to call the guests to dinner (14:17, 21–23) and the servant ordered explicitly to serve (διακονεῖν) in 17:8 is nevertheless called a δοῦλος (17:9–10). Conversely, διακον—words are used in Luke-Acts with a number of different meanings: 'service at table' (Lk 12:37; 17:8; 22:26–27—to these might be added Lk 4:39 and Acts 6:1–4, though in these cases the meaning of διακονεῖν is disputed; see Koperski 2002; Smit 2003); the service of patronage or providing financially for others (Lk 8:3; Acts 11:29; 12:25); apostolic service (Acts 1:17, 25; 20:24; 21:19) and personal commission/representation of an apostle (Acts 19:22). Since διακονία/διακονεῖν has this range of meanings in the Lukan corpus (as well as the range of meanings in wider Christian discourse already noted), the mere occurrence of διακονία cannot be used to assume a meal setting and/or service at table (so also Reid 1996: 147). If Luke intended to depict a meal setting in 10:38–42, the surprising absence of the typical Lukan meal language warrants explanation.

It might be argued, of course, that since διακονία/διακονεῖν has referred to women in all its prior occurrences in Luke (4:38–39; 8:1–3) and since meal preparation was the task of women (Wilkins 2000), a meal context is most readily implied by the use of διακονία/διακονεῖν in all three texts (so, for example, Via 1985). Again, however, the surprising absence of typical Lukan meal language *in all three texts* is puzzling. If διακονία refers to meal preparation and table service of women in these texts, why does Luke so assiduously avoid all other meal terminology, while using such terminology elsewhere?

7.2.2 *Out of the kitchen and into the church*

An alternative interpretation of the pericope considers Martha's διακονία to refer not (only) to table service, but to ministry within the church. This reading owes its genesis largely to Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1986; 1992; 1993) who argues that "*diakonia* and *diakonein* had already become technical terms for ecclesial leadership in Luke's time" and that

> *diakonia* refers to Eucharistic table service in the house-church... [but] was not, however, restricted to such service, since it also included the proclamation of the word. (1992: 62)[5]

This is evident in Acts 6:1–6, a story whose linguistic links with Luke 10:38–42 have often been noted (Laland 1959: 70–85; Gerhardsson 1961: 239–242; Dupont 1979: 117; Barnett 1981: 18). In both stories service (διακονία) of the word is not to be left (καταλιπεῖν) in order to serve (διακονεῖν) at table. In both service at table is subordinated to service of the word. Schüssler Fiorenza considers 'service at table' in

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[5] Here Schüssler Fiorenza's views are taken primarily from *But She Said*, in which she presents her exegesis of the text in a form which she suggests is

> a greatly expanded and revised version of an article which has appeared in two quite different versions: "A feminist critical interpretation for liberation: Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38–42)," *Religion and Intellectual Life* 3 (1986): 16–36 and "Theological Criteria and Historical Reconstruction: Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38–42)," in *Protocol of the Fifty-Third Colloquy: 10 April 1986*, ed. Herman Waetjen (Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1987), 1–12, 41–63. (1992: 230)

The chapter dealing with Luke 10:38–42 in *But She Said* has subsequently also been reprinted in *The Bible and Liberation* (Schüssler Fiorenza 1993).

Acts 6:2 to be Eucharistic service based on 1 Corinthians 10:21 (1983: 165; 1993: 183; compare also Lampe 1966). The fact that Luke embeds the saying about Jesus as coming 'to serve' (διακονεῖν) precisely in the middle of the Last Supper narrative (22:26–27), rather than earlier, as Mark has it (Mk 9:35), also speaks in favour of reading διακονία with Eucharistic association.

Significantly, those chosen for διακονία at the table in Acts 6 are then described engaged also in preaching (7:1–53) and mission (8:5–8). In the Gospel, and specifically in 10:38–42, so Schüssler Fiorenza, the author seeks to exclude women from participation in either ministry. For, although Mary has chosen the good part of listening to the word, she is not depicted (here or later) as preaching the word, as the apostles are, but merely as a silent hearer of the word, while the vocal Martha and her διακονία are silenced by Jesus' pronouncement that hers is not 'the good part.'

> While the Pastoral Epistles explicitly prohibit women to teach men, the Lukan work fails to tell us stories about women preachers, missionaries, prophets, and founders of house-churches. Thus while the Pastorals silence our speech, Acts deforms our historical consciousness. In addition, Luke plays down the ministry of those women leaders of the early church whom he has to mention because they were known to his audience. Martha and Mary are a case in point. (1992: 63; so also Schaberg 1992)[6]

Others have extended this interpretation of the story. D'Angelo (1990b; 1999c) argues that διάκονος and ἀδελφή function as titles in the text; that Martha and Mary were remembered as an early missionary couple known as Martha the διάκονος and Mary the ἀδελφή, parallelling other female missionary pairs (Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Rom 16:12; Euodia and Syntyche, Phil 4:1) and male missionary pairs such as Paul and Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1; D'Angelo 1990b: 78; see also D'Angelo 1990a; Seim 1994a. Ellis 1970–71 identifies ἀδελφός as Paul's preferred term for Christian leadership; the close association of διακονία with commissioned sending has already been documented). Similarly Carter (1996) and Reid (1996) both hold that διακονία here denotes leadership in ministry rather than serving a meal. Bieberstein (1998: 135) demonstrates that in Acts διακονία is to be interepreted in the sense of an office ("qualifizierter Dienst im Sinne eines 'Amtes'"), more specifically as a ministry of proclamation ("Verkündigungsdienst"), always fulfilled by men in the depiction of Acts.

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[6] Schüssler Fiorenza's argument that Martha and Mary are well-known leaders of the early Church is based in on their appearance in the Gospel of John (1992: 64–5).

This interpretation of διακονία as ministry within the church could account for the absence of other meal language in this text (which can similarly be applied to Luke 4:38–39 and 8:1–3) and offers an explanation for the gender dynamics apparent in Luke's use of διακονία/διακονεῖν. For, although Luke is renowned for pairing stories of men with stories of women, Schüssler Fiorenza (1992: 65–67) rightly points out that this parallelism exists only insofar as *membership* in the community is concerned: both men and women are depicted as objects of healing, teaching and salvation. There is no parallelism in the stories of *leadership* in the community, no stories about women leaders paired with the stories about Peter or the other male apostles. Thus the Gospel models gender-inclusive membership, but exclusive leadership of the community.[7] Hence scholars such as Schüssler Fiorenza (1992), Reid (1996; 1999), Price (1997) and Thimmes (2002) attribute an 'anti-feminist' agenda to Luke which finds expression particularly in this text. Conversely, Carter (1996) proposes a reading which, although reading Martha's διακονία as ministry rather than meal preparation, nevertheless does not attribute the same negative intention to the text of seeking to exclude women from such διακονία.

This line of interpretation has not remained without its critics. Collins remains emphatic that such an interpretation fails to consider his own philological studies of the term and imposes "an oddly imposing place in the argumentation" (1998: 106) to the words διακονία and διακονεῖν in Luke 10:38–42. The limitations of Collins' approach and critique have already been noted. Seim (1994a: 99–101; 1994b: 745) has criticised this line of interpretation for positing a technical meaning for the term which at that time was still fluid. Yet this observation in itself does not explain why, within such fluid meaning, Martha's διακονία ought not to be conceptualised in the same terms as the διακονία of the seven in Acts 6:1–7. Neither need be a technical term, let alone an office, for readers/hearers of the story to associate these two texts with each other, or to attribute to Martha's διακονία a similar meaning and function to that assigned to the seven. To the extent that the seven were leaders Martha may be seen as a leader, and consequently Jesus' injunction that Mary has chosen the good part could be interpreted to mean that whatever leadership task, status or office the reader imputes to Martha's διακονία, it is 'not the good part.' Bieberstein (1998: 134–136), conversely, disagrees with the interpretation of Schüssler Fiorenza because she considers the immediate literary context more significant for the interpretation of διακονία and διακονεῖν. Thus she contends the passage should be interpreted in light of the sending of the seventy (Lk 10:1–17) rather than importing meanings attached to the words in Acts.

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[7] On the pairing of stories of men and women in Luke-Acts and its interpretation see also D'Angelo (1990a; 1999a), Seim (1994a), Reid (1996; 1999) and Koperski (1999; 2002; 2005). While earlier scholarship had read such pairings positively (so, for example, Parvey 1974), current feminist scholarship typically reads Luke as presenting a 'double message' to women (so D'Angelo 1990a; Seim 1994a; Reid 1999), though scholars differ in the interpretation of that double message, and in particular whether reading Luke from a perspective of liberating women is reading against the intent of the author (so Reid 1996: 205 n. 52) or not (so Koperski 2005: 47). Furthermore, scholars differ on whether the Martha/Mary story is to be included as a pair with the preceding narrative of the Good Samaritan (so D'Angelo 1990a: 445; 1999a: 182) or not (so Seim 1994a: 14–15; Reid 1996: 147–148).

It might also be asked whether this interpretation of Martha's διακονία fits the patristic evidence. If the Lukan text describes Martha in a leadership capacity—be it as 'missionary,' leader at the Eucharist, or in some other form of ministry—and if the text in fact intends to exclude women from such leadership, did patristic writers ever use the story to that end? Apparently not, as will become evident in the discussion of the patristic interpretations of the narrative; and this failure of later interpreters to read the narrative in that way might be a significant argument against the feminist interpretation of Martha's διακονία as denoting leadership in ministry.

7.3 The text(s)

Modern exegetes disagree on the interpretation of the passage because they differ in their understanding of the meaning of the word διακονία and of the historical and literary contexts that should be used to interpret the text. To complicate matters further, the text contains significant and difficult text-critical problems particularly in the dominical saying which concludes the pericope (detailed treatment of all of these is provided by Brutscheck 1986: 4–29). What exactly did Jesus say to Martha? The variants attested in the manuscripts are usually reduced to four options. The shortest reading omits all reference to the 'few things' or the 'one thing' needed and in its shortest form omits even all reference to Martha being anxious or troubled ("Martha, Martha, Mary has chosen the good part…"). Other manuscripts include the reference to Martha's anxiety and suggest that "few things are needed" (μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά, ὀλίγων δέ ἐστιν χρεία). A third group include "one thing needed" (μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά, ἑνὸς δέ ἐστιν χρεία) while the longest reading includes all possibilities (μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά, ὀλίγων δέ ἐστιν χρεία ἢ ἑνὸς).

Others have discussed these textual variants at length (e.g., Baker 1965; Dupont 1979; Fee 1981; Brutscheck 1986: 5–12; Metzger 1994: 153–154) and there is consequently no need to rehearse the detailed arguments here. Apart from the omission of the whole clause, which is probably not original (since the author is unlikely to have written three names in sequence), all other variants have had their supporters. Augsten (1967–68) opts for ὀλίγων δέ ἐστιν χρεία as original while Baker (1965), Dupont (1979) and Brutschek (1986: 10–12) decide in favour of ἑνὸς δέ ἐστιν χρεία. Gillieson (1947–48) argues for the longest reading (ὀλίγων δέ ἐστιν χρεία ἢ ἑνὸς) and is followed in this by Fee (1981) and Fitzmyer (1981: 1.895).

The variants are significant because if Jesus points to the 'few things needed,' then the referent (particularly if διακονία refers to a meal) are the few dishes which Martha needs to prepare (so, for example, Augsten 1967–1968); while the referent of the 'one thing' is the 'good part' which Mary has chosen, in contrast with the 'many things' about which Martha is worried and distracted. Thus, while the central focus in the 'few things' is Jesus and his needs (few dishes are needed for his meal), the focus of the 'one thing needed' is the disciple and her needs (Brutscheck 1986: 12). For the longest reading one might also argue that 'few things are needed (for the body) or one (for the soul),' or perhaps 'few things are needed (for me) and really only one thing is needed (for you),' an interpretation offered by Laland (1959: 75–76; see also Godet cited in Fee 1981: 71). Thus the three variants create three different stories.

Text variants create a problem for text critics who search for the 'original text.' Yet this search for the 'original'—in whose favour other variants may be discarded as 'secondary' and relegated to the footnotes—is perhaps misguided (so Parker 1997; see also Ehrman 2000) and certainly obscures some important implications of this rich variety in the manuscripts. First, the variability seen in Luke 10:38–42 might be evidence that the creators, interpreters and copyists of the tradition found this story as mystifying as we do and tried to make sense of it in various ways. Second, it indicates that they found the story useful for a variety of situations and rhetorical purposes and adapted it accordingly. Hence the question is not, which is the correct reading? but rather, which reading applies in which situation? and what does each reading reveal about the rhetorical intent of its scribe/interpreter? Third, the variants are evidence for the importance and profusion of the story in oral tradition. For far from 'fixing' and ending oral traditions, written texts simply re-enter the oral context each time they are read (Cartlidge 1990). A story told frequently is likely to have a variety of shapes and to be preserved in a variety of shapes in the written tradition.

The variations seen in Luke 10:38–42 provide evidence that this story, more than many others, was popular in early Christian communities; that it enjoyed wide circulation, was read, told and retold, re-interpreted and applied to a variety of circumstances. Such diversity in interpretations and application to a variety of rhetorical situations is also evident in patristic interpretations of the text, a point to which I will return below. Since my primary goal is to trace early Christian traditions about Martha, the aim here is not to identify *the* meaning of the text(s), nor to uncover a hypothetical original version of the story, but rather to follow some of the currents and eddies of the many different forms in which this story circulated and the variety of rhetorical purposes to which it was put.

7.4 The story

In its current literary setting the story is embedded within the Lukan travel narrative whose major concern is discipleship, linked to this wider setting by its opening ("as they were on the way…"), as well as by the parallels between 10:38 and 10:1–9. Martha welcomes (ὑπεδέξατο) the one who enters the village (εἰσῆλθεν εἰς κώμην τινά; cf. 10:5, 8) and as such acts like the model 'child of peace' (υἱὸς εἰρήνης) envisaged in Luke 10:6 (Carter 1996: 267; Moessner 1989: 144–145).[8] The traditional meal interpretation of 10:38–42 can be derived from these parallels with

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[8] The change from plural to singular forms in 10:38 ("as *they* went on their way *he* entered a certain village…") suggest the incorporation of a narrative that initially included only Jesus and the two women, now embedded in a story which recounts the travels of Jesus with a larger group of disciples. The shift also results in differing interpretations: some imagine the other disciples are present in 10:39–42 (so, for example, Reid 1996: 151), while others imagine only Jesus, Martha and Mary are involved (so, for example, Witherington and Witherington 1990).

10:1–9, given the explicit references to eating in this earlier passage (so Bieberstein 1998: 123–127). At the same time it is noteworthy that food *is* explicitly mentioned in 10:1–9 and *is not* explicitly mentioned in the Martha/Mary pericope; whereas διακονία and διακονεῖν, conversely, do not occur in 10:5–12. While both Martha and the 'children of peace' welcome Jesus/the messengers, they are thus also different: Martha is named; those who welcome the messengers in the earlier text remain nameless. They offer hospitality, she offers διακονία. Consequently the links with 10:1–9 do not necessarily interpret διακονία as the service of hospitality, much less limit it to such serving.[9]

The introduction privileges Martha as the central character alongside Jesus: it is she alone who is named, she alone who welcomes the Lord. Scholars are divided on the extent to which this is Martha's story more than Mary's (so, for example, Alexander 1992; arguing on the basis of linguistic evidence), or whether the dualist dynamics inscribed into the text inherently make this a story about two women, with Martha serving as negative foil for Mary (so, for example, Schüssler Fiorenza 1992). Brutschek (1986: 38) and Bieberstein (1998: 130) opt for a double opposition in which an initial opposition between Martha and the κύριος (10:38)[10] shifts to a contrast between Mary and Martha (10:39–40), reflected in their differing responses to the κύριος, and back to an opposition between Martha and the κύριος whose decisive word resolves the opposition between Martha and Mary (in favour of Mary).

The introduction of Martha as "a certain woman named Martha" (γυνὴ δέ τις ὀνόματι Μάρθα, 10:38) could imply that she is unknown to the audience but, more likely, simply reflects a favourite Lukan way of introducing new characters (e.g., Lk 8:27; 10:30; 14:16; 19:2; 22:50; Acts 5:1; 8:9; 10:1). Bumpus (2000: 312) maintains that γυνή τις (like ἀνήρ τις and ἄνθρωπός τις) introduces a representative character with whom the audience is intended to identify. Martha's act of welcoming has soteriological implications, seen particularly in the parallels between this text and the narrative of Zacchaeus (19:1–10). Like Martha,

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[9] Compare Corley (1993: 142), who highlights 10:1–9 as the appropriate context for interpreting v.38–42, but nevertheless identifies διακονία as "the activity of the men" which the women are to leave to the men in favour of offering the kind of hospitality envisaged in 10:1–9.

[10] The Aramaic name Martha means "mistress, lady" (Cheyne 1902; Sabo 1997: 106); thus the κύρια here welcomes the κύριος into her house.

Zacchaeus "welcomes" (ὑπεδέξατο, 19:6) the one "entering" (εἰσελθών, 19:1) Jericho and thereby receives salvation (19:9).[11] Welcoming therefore involves not just receiving the messenger, but receiving the message (see Acts 17:7; Wall 1989: 24–25). Schüssler Fiorenza (1992: 62; 1993: 182) suggests the use of the Christological title κύριος locates the pericope in the life of the early Church rather than of the historical Jesus (see also 12:41, 45; 13:23; 14:21, 23). It certainly connects it to the κύριος who sends the workers into the harvest in 10:1. It should be noted, however, that many manuscripts and patristic commentators on the pericope read Ἰησοῦς, not κύριος, both in v.39 and v.41 (see also Brutscheck 1986: 23–24, who considers κύριος original).

"And she had a sister named Mary…" (10:39). Martha rarely appears in early Christian tradition without her sister.[12] Martha and Mary belong together. Often Martha is conceived as the older sister, perhaps because she is mentioned first and, in her act of welcoming Jesus, appears as the head of the house, which in some versions of the story is explicitly identified as hers (Brutscheck 1986: 16–19). Mary is introduced in relation to Martha, not only as her sister, but also in a grammatical construction that retains the focus on Martha: καὶ τῇδε ἦν ἀδελφή, "and *she* had a sister" (10:39). Commentators usually assume a blood relationship between the women, though the extensive usage of ἀδελφός to denote fictive kin relationships within early Christian discourse makes this by no means necessary (see for example Lk 8:19–21). This issue has already been discussed in relation to John 11 (see p. 27–28). Suffice it to recall here Hellerman's argument that the conception of the community as a family is central to early Christian self-understanding, and that the use of kin language, particularly ἀδελφός/ἀδελφή, is used rhetorically to promote behaviour "consonant with Mediterranean family values" (2001: 126) such as sharing of resources, sibling loyalty, truthfulness and honesty.

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[11] Compare this with the use of ξενίζειν, denoting hospitality, in Acts 10:6, 23; 21:16; 28:7. Laland (1959: 72) uses the connection of ἀποδέχομαι with hospitality in Luke-Acts to support his theory that the original *Sitz* of the story was the hospitality offered to itinerant preachers in the early Church. Brutschek concurs with this assessment, but proposes that, rather than its current context, the text was more likely linked with the narrative of Zacchaeus (19:1–9) in the pre-Lukan tradition (1986: 151–152, 161–162).

[12] The only two exceptions of which I am aware have already been discussed. They are Hippolytus' *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, which identifies Martha as the woman who anointed Jesus (see p. 115–116), and the occasional identification of Martha as the woman with the flow of blood (see p. 63).

Both Schüssler Fiorenza (1983: 168–175) and D'Angelo (1990b: 78–80) further emphasise the technical meaning which the term acquired in some contexts. In epistolary greetings 'brother' appears as a title paired with 'apostle' (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1–2; Col 1:1; Phlm 1; see also 1 Thess 3:2; Jude 1). The stability of the description of Martha as the one serving (διακονεῖν) and Mary as her sister (ἀδελφή) in Luke (10:38, 39) and John (11:5, 21; 12:2) is the basis for D'Angelo's argument that "behind the stories in Luke and John lies a tradition about a famous missionary couple, Martha the *diakonos*, and Mary, the *adelphe*" (1990b: 80). She does not argue that these stories therefore establish the historical existence of Martha and Mary; nor does she locate them in the life of the historical Jesus, suggesting rather that "the features of the tradition seem to suggest…the functioning of the early Christian mission" (D'Angelo 1990b: 80). It needs to be noted, however, that Martha is also described as ἀδελφή (Jn 11:1, 3). Moreover, Martha's role as the householder who welcomes Jesus casts her in the role of settled leader of a house church, rather than as itinerant missionary, and perhaps even merely as recipient of the message and supporter of the mission (like the anonymous hosts of 10:6–8). Decisive in the interpretation of Martha is which is taken to be more significant, the parallels with the immediate context of Luke 10:1–9 (in which neither διακονία/διακονεῖν nor ἀδελφος/ἀδελφή occur), or rather the meanings which attached to these words in early Christian discourse.

Mary's place at the feet of the Lord sets her where those recently healed appear (cf. Lk 8:35; 17:16). The emphasis is placed on the act of hearing: Mary, "being seated by the feet of the Lord, was listening to his word" (παρακαθεσθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου ἤκουεν τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ, 10:39). Mary's position contrasts with that of Martha: she sits (Martha will later come and stand) and she appears still (though this remains implicit in the text), while Martha is περιεσπᾶτο περὶ πολλὴν διακονίαν (10:40). Bieberstein (1998: 137–139) further observes that sitting and listening to the word characterises Mary as a disciple and that hearing and doing of the word are closely connected in Luke (6:46–49; 8:15, 21; 11:28). Unlike scholars who emphasise the silence and passivity of Mary (Schüssler Fiorenza 1986: 6–7; Corley 1993: 137), Bieberstein considers 'doing' to be implicit in hearing and assumes that Mary belongs to those who do not merely hear, but act on, the word. 'Hearing and doing' is, in the opinion of Bieberstein, the 'one thing' needed of 10:42. Yet it has rightly been observed that such interpretations that reconcile hearing and doing do not do justice to the text precisely because the text does *not* say that Mary acts on the word but depicts her only as a hearer (Reid 1996: 146). The same critique can be levelled at those interpreters who assume that Mary's depiction as a student of the rabbi imply that she will one day also be a teacher (so Waetjen 1986). For Luke's second volume, Acts, provides ample opportunity for the student to be depicted as teacher; and in the case of Peter and John such depictions abound (Acts 1:15–21; 2:14–47; 3:12–4:13; 5:28–32; 8:14–25). One looks in vain for stories of Mary taking her place among the teachers of the church in Acts.

While Mary is listening to the word, Martha is περιεσπᾶτο: 'drawn away,' 'busy,' 'overburdened.'[13] The verb is not necessarily used with negative loading (LXX Ecc 5:19; but cf. 2 Sam 6:6; Ecc 1:13; 3:10). Indeed, the 'burdening' of Martha assumes different colouring if her 'service' with which she is 'burdened' pertains to the church and its apostolic mission and so entails "leadership or ministry in the Christian community and on its behalf" (Carter 1996: 272). Thus Carter reads this narrative as a story about conflicts in ministry partnerships and how to resolve them, attaching no particular significance to the gender of the persons involved (beyond noting it as evidence for women in leadership) and little to the negative loading of περιεσπᾶτο.

Reid offers a slightly different interpretation on the basis of the preposition περί which here has the sense of 'about' or 'concerning.'

> Read in the light of the disputes in Luke's day over women's involvement in certain ministries, Martha's complaint to Jesus is not about having too much work to do, but rather that she is being denied her role in

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[13] The image of Martha being 'drawn away' fits well, particularly if one identifies both women as sitting at the feet of the Lord listening to his word. Some manuscripts omit the relative pronoun ἣ, in which case Martha could still be the subject of the verbs παρακαθεσθεῖσα and ἤκουεν (Brutscheck 1986: 20–21; who considers the omission original; see also D'Angelo 1990a: 454). But is also possible to read the καί after the relative pronoun adverbially: she (Mary) *also* sat at the feet ([ἣ] καὶ παρακαθεσθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας)—so, for example, Goulder (1989: 495), in contrast to Geldenhuis (1951: 317 n. 4) who asserts that the καί only serves to emphasise the pronoun (see also Haenchen 1971: 140 n. 8). This would imply either that Mary sat there with her sister Martha, or that Mary served with Martha, but also found time to sit at the feet of the Lord. Here, as elsewhere, gender stereotypes have played a significant role in interpretation, expressed in attempts to make the story and its moral conform to contemporary gender role expectations. So, for example, Geldenhuys:

> Martha goes on and on until she is distracted; but Mary *also* sat at His feet. This is a most vital distinction. Some people seem to imagine that all she did was to sit herself down, to have a good time. If she had done that, Christ would never have commended her. (1951: 317 n. 4)

> ministerial service…Martha is burdened *about* or *with reference to* her numerous ministerial works, not *by* or *with* them. Her distress *about* them is generated by the opposition of those who think she should be leaving them to men. (1996: 157)

In this her interpretation differs from Carter, for Martha is neither overburdened nor drawn away *by* her ministry, but rather is drawn away by others *from* her ministry. Though perhaps one might expect the preposition ἀπό rather than περί and, as Reid also notes, the complaint of Martha is that Mary fails to help. In the first instance, therefore, the complaint of Martha is not about being denied a διακονία for herself, but rather about being denied help in her διακονία by her sister (cf. Bieberstein 1998: 136; who levels the same critique at the interpretation of Schüssler Fiorenza).

Hard to sustain is the reading of Bieberstein who, on the one hand, disqualifies Schüssler Fiorenza's interpretation of διακονία as referring to ministry precisely because it is characterised negatively by association with περισπᾶσθαι, μεριμνᾶν and θορυβάζεσθαι (1998: 136) and yet seeks to rescue Martha's service from critique at the hand of Jesus. "Es kann…nicht darum gehen, daß das Verhalten der Marta abgewerted wird, oder daß zwei Frauen oder zwei Lebensweisen von Frauen gegeneinander ausgespielt werden" (1998: 140).[14] Quite to the contrary: precisely the oppositions embedded in the story mean that two opposites *are* played off against each other and "the stark contrasts of the two women and the clear exaltation by Jesus of the one over the other" must be taken seriously (so Reid 1996: 146). The narrative has set up two contrasting positions: 'sitting listening to the word of the Lord' and 'being drawn away by much serving.'

Martha's response to her situation is to stand before the Lord, her stance contrasting the sitting Mary. The verb used, ἐφίστημι, is a Lukan favourite (18 of its 21 occurrences in the New Testament are in Luke-Acts and two others occur in the Pastorals which have been linked to the Lukan circle; Price 1997: xx–xxix). Luke-Acts uses the word in the context of encounters with divine beings (so in Lk 2:9; 24:4; Acts 23:11; Fitzmyer 1981: 1.409; Carter 1996: 274). As such the verb also has a sense of suddenness or unexpectedness about it (Lk 21:34; Acts 12:7; Danker 2000: 418). It also denotes authoritative standing (Lk 2:38; 4:39;

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[14] "It cannot be a case of devaluing the behaviour of Martha, or of playing two women or two lifestyles of women off against each other."

Acts 22:13, 20) and in some cases confrontation (Lk 20:1; Acts 4:1; 6:12; 17:5). How does Martha stand before the Lord? Is it as an opponent accusing him: 'Don't you care…?' Or is it standing as one stands in the presence of the divine (so Carter 1996: 274)? The latter is an unlikely reading given that elsewhere in the Lukan corpus ἐφίστημι, when used in encounters with the divine, always denotes the approach of the divine, not of the human (Lk 2:9; 24:4; Acts 12:7; 23:11). The reading of ἐπιστᾶσα as implying that Martha here stands as Jesus' opponent accusing him is possible. However, in other confrontations those who stand 'over against' are already cast in the role of villains: they are the religious leaders (Lk 20:1; Acts 4:1; 6:9–12) or 'the Jews' (Acts 17:5). Martha, conversely, has been described not as an opponent, nor even neutrally, but very positively, as one who welcomes the Lord. Martha's standing therefore appears most akin to the authoritative standing of those who speak the word of God or act in God's name: Anna (Lk 2:38), Jesus (Lk 4:39) and Ananias (Acts 22:13). Yet unlike these she stands thus before the Lord and, like Paul (Acts 22:20), discovers that the ground shifts beneath her; the position which she had presumed divinely authorised is corrected by the Lord.

It is hardly surprising that Martha should consider herself justified. "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" (οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἡ ἀδελφή μου μόνην με κατέλιπεν διακονεῖν; 10:40). On both readings of διακονία Mary is supposed to be with Martha, either fulfilling her duties as a woman whose task it is to prepare the food, or as the sister (ministry partner) of Martha fulfilling the responsibility of carrying her share of the load in the mission and ministry. Those arguing for a meal interpretation need to explain why the request for help is directed at Jesus not Mary,[15] whereas this address is readily explained if the request is for help in the apostolic mission, for the disciples have been directed specifically to ask the Lord for help in this matter (Lk 10:2). Carter (1996: 274–275) suggests, therefore, that Martha acts as the Lukan economy envisages any community leader should in such a situation: she takes her troubles to the Lord and asks for help—"Tell her, therefore, to help me" (εἰπὲ οὖν αὐτῇ ἵνα μοι συναντιλάβηται).[16]

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[15] Such explanations sometimes involve contortions, such as arguing that Jesus was married to Mary of Bethany and hence Martha was not permitted to address her sister directly but needed to direct her request through the husband (Twycross 1996).

[16] Συναντιλάβηται is *hapax* in the Lukan corpus, but see the similar request of Simon in Luke 5:7 (with συλλαμβάνω); the use of συναντιλαμβάνομαι in the LXX of

If, however, Martha is "doing what any burdened person or community should do in Luke's world" (Carter 1996: 274), one might ask why her request is rebuffed. Indeed, therein lies a fundamental interpretive problem, particularly in light of 22:26–27, where Jesus describes himself as one who has come to serve (ὁ διακονῶν) and establishes service as the task of leadership in the community. If the leader is to become 'like one who serves' (ὁ διακονῶν, 22:26), why has Martha who serves chosen what is not 'the good part'?[17]

At this point, of course, the exegesis depends not only on one's interpretation of Martha's διακονία but also on the version of the story being told. The first part of the response can be established with some confidence: Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά.[18] The double vocative appears regularly in the Lukan corpus (e.g., Lk 8:24; 13:34; 22:31). Reid suggests "the double 'Martha, Martha' chides her" (1996: 158). Having noted the similarity in Martha's stance with that of Paul in Acts 22:20 earlier, the double vocative might also be compared with the double vocative in the call narratives of Paul (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14), which not so much chides as calls to repentance. Worry (μεριμνᾶν) is a negative attribute elsewhere in Luke: worries choke the seed of the word of God (8:14); the disciples are told not to worry about what they will eat or wear (12:22–26) or what they will say when they are accused (12:11); and the 'cares of this life' weigh down the heart (21:34).

Not only is Martha worried, but she is "troubled" (θορυβάζῃ). In the active the word means 'to cause trouble'; and as Reid observes, while θορυβάζω occurs only here in the New Testament, its cognates θορυβέω and θόρυβος

> occur eleven times, always in the context of a disturbance made by a crowd. This word suggests a troubledness that goes beyond an individual worry; the conflict is something that has the whole community in an uproar. (Reid 1996: 158; see also Corley 1993: 140; Thimmes 2002: 241)

Ex 18:22; Num 11:17; Ps 88:22 (English 89:21) and the use of ἀντιλαμβάνομαι in Lk 1:54 and Acts 20:35.

[17] While many commentators translate τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα as 'the better part,' the primary meaning of ἀγαθός is 'good' rather than 'better.' The latter is expressed through words such as βελτιός (for example, Gen 29:19 LXX), κρείττων (for example, 1 Cor 7:9) and λυσιτελής (Lk 17:2).

[18] Western texts, particularly Latin texts, vary in some cases and many manuscripts substitute the synonym τυρβάζῃ for the less common θορυβάζῃ (Brutscheck 1986: 5–8; Metzger 1994: 153).

Martha is troubled about "many things" (περὶ πολλά). These "many things" contrast the "one thing necessary" (ἑνὸς δέ ἐστιν χρεία). Alternatively, depending on one's manuscript and/or one's text-critical preferences, the contrast might instead, or also, be with the "few things" (ὀλίγων) which are needed.[19]

All versions of the story agree that "Mary has chosen the good part, which will not be taken (away) from her" (Μαριὰμ γὰρ τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα ἐξελέξατο ἥτις οὐκ ἀφαιρεθήσεται αὐτῆς, 10:42). While μερίς can be used of food portions, it is also used for the 'allotted reward' of the one who grows rich through work (ἡ μερὶς τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ, Sir 11:18) and the 'portion of salvation' (κύριος ἡ μερὶς τῆς κληρονομίας μου, Ps 15:5; cf. Lk 10:25).[20] Mary has chosen the part which is such (ἥτις) that it will not be taken away from her. If the μερίς is identified with Mary's action of listening to the words of the Lord, then Mary's 'choosing' (ἐκλέγομαι) to listen recalls the divine directive of Luke 9:35, "This is my Son, the chosen one; listen to him" (Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος, αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε).

The lack of specificity allows a wide range of interpretations as to what these 'many things,' 'few things,' 'one thing' and 'good part' might be: many dishes for a meal contrasted with the few dishes required, many tasks of service contrasted with the one task of listening, many commandments of the Old Covenant contrasted with the one law of love, or even many tasks accruing to those entrusted with leadership, also contrasted with the role of listening or learning. Moreover, while the contrast in the dominical saying, strictly speaking, is between the 'many things' and the 'few things/one thing,' and between 'worrying' and 'choosing the good part,' the dualistic opposition built into the story lends itself to seeing the contrast precisely between 'serving' and 'listening,' such that what is critiqued is not just Martha's worry, but implicates her act of serving itself; and what is praised is not merely

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[19] Baker (1965: 136) notes the parallels with Sirach 11:10 which warns against being busy with 'many matters' (μὴ περὶ πολλὰ ἔστωσαν αἱ πράξεις σου).

[20] Gerhardsson offers an interesting interpretation that connects the μερίς of Mary with the lot in a Talmudic blessing:

> I thank thee, the Eternal One, my God, that thou hast cast my lot among those who sit in college, and not among those who sit at the corners of the streets. For I arise early, and they arise early. I arise early to the words of the Torah, and they arise early to works of vanity. I strive and they strive. I strive and am repaid, they strive and are not repaid. I run and they run. I run toward eternal life. They run toward the well of destruction. (1961: 239)

Mary's choice of the good part, but her act of listening.[21] Ultimately the critique is directed at Martha and justifies Mary.

It seems to me that there are two critical factors in the interpretation of the text. First, it cannot be ignored that Luke 22:26–27 fundamentally defines διακονεῖν as the ministry of Jesus and of the disciples. Διακονία epitomises what Jesus came to do and what the disciples are called to do. That association cannot simply be read out of Luke 10:38–42, all the more so because the Lukan saying, by omitting the phrase "and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45), broadens the scope of the meaning of this service from the more narrow reference to Jesus' self-giving in death to an all-encompassing symbol of Jesus' ministry (Smith 1987: 630–633).

Second, the decisive difference between 10:38–42 and 22:26–27 is that in the former διακονία—or a certain way of carrying out such διακονία—is criticised, while in the latter διακονία is unequivocally affirmed. Moreover, in the one case it is the διακονία of a woman, while in the other it is the διακονία of men. The gender of the characters cannot be ignored, all the more so because Seim (1994a) rightly observes that 'serving' is consistently the task of women in the first three instances of its appearance in the Lukan corpus (4:39; 8:3; 10:38–42) but is never again applied to women after this point. Once διακονία has become the call to ministry addressed to the disciples, women are no longer depicted engaged in such ministry, while conversely the story that most extensively depicts a woman engaged in διακονία depicts her as 'overburdened' by it and rules that the woman who has chosen to 'leave' such διακονία has chosen 'the good part.'

The charge that Luke is following a gendered agenda that seeks to limit women's participation in leadership and ministry appears justified, all the more so because women are not depicted in leadership positions even when the context would have readily lent itself to such depiction. Thus Philip's "daughters who were prophesying" (παρθένοι προφετεύοσαι, Acts 21:9) in fact are not shown prophesying but are supplanted by a male prophet (21:10–11; see Price 1997: 61–70; who argues that Agabus has been inserted into the narrative precisely for the purpose of silencing the women prophets). Significant women converts are depicted in acts of charity and hospitality, but not in ministry (Tabitha, Acts 9:36–41; Lydia, Acts 16:14–15). D'Angelo's comment (1990a: 455) that "women's ministry is not denied or forbidden, but rather avoided" in Luke-Acts appears apt (see also O'Day 1992: 312).

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[21] See Dupont (1979: 118) who delineates a close parallelism between Martha's request and Jesus' response: "don't you care…?" (οὐ μέλει σοι; 10:40) matches "you are worried and distracted" (μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ, 10:41); the address Κύριε parallels Μάρθα Μάρθα, and the subsequent explanation (Μαριὰμ γὰρ…, 10:42) explains why Jesus does not tell Mary what Martha asks him to (εἰπὲ οὖν αὐτῇ…, 10:40). Since Martha's being "left alone to serve" (μόνην με κατέλιπεν διακονεῖν) contrasts her "many tasks of service" (πολλὴν διακονίαν, 10:40), both the "many" (πολλά) and the "one" (ἑνός) of Jesus' response (10:41–42) are linked with Martha's διακονία/διακονεῖν just as readily as with her worry and distraction. Dupont himself is quick to point out that the reproach is directed at Martha's worry and agitation, not her service (1979: 119); but Brutschek (1986: 160) claims that the pre-Lukan tradition involved precisely this contrast serving/hearing rather than worrying/hearing, and entailed not so much an opposition between the two but a surpassing of the one by the other.

Women were engaged in leadership in the Pauline ministry, including as apostles (Rom 16:7), prophets (1 Cor 11:5), teachers (Rom 16:3; Acts 18:6), 'deacons' (Rom 16:1), and co-workers (Phil 4:3).[22] Whatever ministry forms and structures were current in the Pauline churches, it appears that women participated at all levels. By the time of the Pastorals, however, women were to be 'silent' rather than teachers (1 Tim 2:12). Luke-Acts appears to fit between these two; to be pursuing an agenda in which women are preferred in roles of patrons rather than leaders, silent rather than proclaiming the gospel (D'Angelo 1990a; Schaberg 1992: 279; Price 1997: xvi–xx. A detailed analysis of all the women in Acts is provided by Richter Reimer 1992).[23] This movement from women to whom Paul defers (Rom 16:1–2, 7) or whom he recognises as co-workers (Rom 16:1–8; Phil 4:2–3) and who can appear as powerful opponents (compare Wire 1990) to women who are silenced can hardly have occurred without a struggle.

How does Luke-Acts participate in that struggle? Can Luke simply assert what is, or what is now to be the case, with regard to women in particular, or can he expect significant opposition? The latter seems more plausible. The references to 'leading women' who converted (Acts 17:4, 12, 34; see also 5:14; 8:3, 12; 16:1, 13), to women who were with the Twelve from the beginning (Acts 1:14; Lk 8:1–3); and the inclusion of stories about women (Acts 5:1–11; 9:36–41; 12:12–13; 16:14–15; 21:9) all create an impression of a movement in which powerful women are present (so also Moxnes 1994). At the same time, even as these women are visible in the text, their role and ministry in the community is rendered invisible.[24] The stories of Paul, Barnabas and Philip the evangelist are told; the stories of Priscilla, the daughters of Philip and Damaris are not. If Luke knows of Junia, Phoebe, Euodia and Syntyche, he gives no sign of it. While he knows Timothy's mother (Acts 16:1), neither her name nor her story are recounted, much as 2 Tim 1:5 suggests that Lois and Eunice might have been well-known and active leaders in their community. Unless one imagines that the 'leading women' in the text and the leading women known from the Pauline correspondence have all disappeared, or been effectively silenced by the time of the writing of Luke-Acts, such 'leading women' can be expected also among the Lukan audience. In this context it seems unlikely that the linguistic connection between 'serving' in Luke 10:38–42 and 22:26–27, and the gender of the characters in 10:38–42 are irrelevant. Nor are the 'leading women' likely to hear the story as a tale about excessive hospitality. The implications for leadership in ministry are not likely to be lost on them.

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[22] On women in the Pauline mission, see Danielou (1961), Ellis (1970–71), Richardson (1986), Schottroff (1993), Whelan (1993), Cotter (1994), Castelli (1999) and MacDonald (1999a).

[23] Price (1997: xx–xxix) argues that the Pastorals derive from Luke's pen. Their linguistic affinities suggest that they arise at least from a similar milieu. They demonstrate a similar agenda with regard to women.

Seeking to prevent women from holding leadership positions, Luke offers a story of a woman in such a position who finds herself 'overburdened' by this ministry (διακονία) and is told that Mary, who has chosen to leave the ministry to others, has chosen the better part. This interpretation is consistent with the meaning of διακονία and διακονεῖν in early Christian texts, including in Luke, and with the portrayal of women in Luke-Acts, read against the background of what is known about women in the earliest Christian movement from the Pauline correspondence. Whether Luke was effective in convincing his audience, let alone whether the various readers and interpreters of the text imputed the same meaning to the story, is another question, the question of the story in the hands of its interpreters.

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[24] For a different reading see Arlandson (1997) who proposes that Luke uses class and gender to demonstrate the reversal announced in Luke 2:34, that Jesus "is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel." He observes that the prominent women who convert "do not suffer demotion upon conversion" and asks whether they assume leadership roles in the church, noting that "on the destiny of the prominent women Luke is silent" (1997: 130). Yet that is precisely the point: the silence of Luke regarding these 'prominent women' and any leadership roles they might have held could be an intentional and powerful rhetorical strategy that has quite a different effect to that imagined by Arlandson, removing any role models that might serve as precedents for women seeking to assume leadership positions.

7.5 THE STORY IN THE HANDS OF ITS INTERPRETERS

It has already become apparent that the narrative of Luke 10:38–42 appeared in a range of different text forms in early manuscripts and has received a range of interpretations among modern exegetes. Turning to early Christian interpreters of the story one can consider not only patristic exegetes of the Lukan text over the centuries, but also the interpreters in the earliest Christian communities at the time of the writing of the New Testament documents. In the latter case the issue is not only the text as we have it (or rather, the texts as we have them), but the oral versions circulating before and alongside the narrative recorded in Luke. The task is thus extensive, even without repeating the detailed redaction-critical study of Brutschek (1986) or the detailed survey of patristic exegesis of this text by Csányi (1960; see also the more limited surveys of Solignac and Donnat 1980; and Bumpus 2000). It is worth devoting space to such a survey, however, because it reveals a number of interesting trends and issues for New Testament exegesis. Some interpretations popular in modern exegesis find little, if any, counterpart in patristic exegesis (and vice versa) while interpretive contexts which are rarely considered in New Testament exegesis of this pericope are revealed to be highly significant for understanding how early Christians made sense of the story.

7.5.1 *Martha, Mary and the women of Corinth*

Brutschek (1986) argues that the Martha/Mary pericope is not a Lukan creation, though it has been heavily redacted in the process of its inclusion in the Gospel. Linguistic links with 1 Corinthians 7:32–35 raise the possibility that Luke used this text in the creation of the Martha/Mary pericope, or conversely that Paul refers to the story in his advice on celibacy. The latter is particularly intriguing because it raises the question whether the women of Corinth used the Martha/Mary story in support of their choice of celibacy. 1 Corinthians 7:32–35 contrasts women who are married and consequently worry (μεριμνᾶν) about pleasing their husbands with the unmarried who worry (μεριμνᾶν) about pleasing the Lord. Paul writes specifically because he wishes them to be both "free from concern" (ἀμέριμνος, 7:32) and "undistracted" (ἀπερισπάστως, 7:35). These ἀμέριμνος and ἀπερισπάστως can be contrasted with Martha who is "worried" (μεριμνᾷς) about many things and “distracted” (περιεσπᾶτο) by her serving (Lk 10:40, 42). Both ἀπερισπάστως and περιεσπᾶτο are *hapax legomena* in the New Testament. It would be a strange coincidence that they should occur in texts which both deal with women, worry and contrasting approaches to the Lord. Finally, the expression εὐπάρεδρον τῷ κυρίῳ (1 Cor 7:35) literally means “a good attendant” or “being seated well beside.” Paul’s desire that the women of Corinth should be “seated well beside the Lord” thus echoes the position of Mary, seated by the feet of the Lord attending to his word (παρακαθεσθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου ἤκουεν τὸν λόγον αὐτου, Lk 10:39).

These linguistic links have been noted repeatedly (Creed 1930: 154; Manson 1949: 263; Laland 1959: 74; Gerhardsson 1961: 314; Potterie 1970; Marshall 1978: 452; Dupont 1979: 117; Brutscheck 1986: 145–147; Koperski 2002). The direction of influence has been argued in both directions. Goulder (1989: 136–137, 493–494) claims that Luke knew and used 1 Corinthians 7 to create the story of Martha and Mary. He therefore reasons that Martha must have been married (to fit the model of the married woman who worries about pleasing her husband), but then also allows that she may be a widow, since she welcomes Jesus (Goulder 1989: 137, 494). This creates the odd situation in which Luke supposedly used 1 Cor 7:32–35 “to fill in his picture” (Goulder 1989: 493); and yet at the same time has not included the most important aspect of the picture, the contrast between the married and the unmarried woman. As an unmarried or widowed woman Martha does not fit the Pauline woman who “worries about the things of the world, how she may please her husband” (1 Cor 7:34). Even if one imputes to Martha an imaginary husband, the fact that he makes no appearance in the narrative means that Martha’s διακονία—and consequently also her worry—are directed towards the Lord. As such she fits the woman who “worries about pleasing the Lord,” rather than the γαμήσασα μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου of 1 Corinthians 7:34.[25]

Others have argued the converse, that Paul bases his advice in 1 Corinthians 7 on the Martha/Mary pericope (Moule 1952; cited approvingly by Gerhardsson 1961: 314). For Moule the similarities between 1 Corinthians 7:35 and Luke 10:38–42 suggest that the origin of some of the sayings and parables in the Gospels may lie not in the teachings of Jesus, but in early Christian catechesis. Wenham (1995: 246–250) raises another possibility, that the women of Corinth found in the Martha/Mary story support for their own position of favouring celibacy over marriage and abstinence within marriage. In either case the comparison again depends on identifying Martha with the γαμήσασα μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου.

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[25] Note also the similar critique of claiming dependence of Luke on 1 Corinthians 7 offered by Brutschek (1986: 147).

The difficulty with arguing influence in either way, be it from Paul to Luke or Luke to Paul, is that central to the Lukan narrative is the contrast between διακονεῖν and ἤκουεν τὸν λόγον, neither of which occur in 1 Cor 7:32–35 (Brutscheck 1986: 147). It is true, of course, that Jesus' response in Luke 10:41–42 does not contrast these two, but rather "worrying about many things" and "the one thing needed" (or perhaps "the few things," though in this case the similarity with 1 Cor 7:32–35 is even further reduced). Yet precisely the 'sitting beside' and 'distracted/undistracted' links which commentators cite in evidence of dependency of the texts refer in Luke 10 to the opposition of Mary who sits *listening* (implying that she is 'undistracted' as 1 Cor 7:35 envisages) contrasted with Martha who is distracted *not* about 'how to please a husband' (as in 1 Cor 7:34) but rather "with much serving" (περὶ πολλὴν διακονίαν, 10:40). Both the married and the unmarried women in 1 Corinthians 7:34 engage in the same activity: they "worry how to please," with the object of their concern the matter of comparison (μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου/μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, ἀρέσῃ τῷ ἀνδρί/ἀρέσῃ τῷ κυρίῳ) while in Luke 10:41–42 the comparison is not only between the object (περὶ πολλά/τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα), but between the activity itself: 'being worried and troubled' and 'listening to the word' (the latter equated with 'choosing the good part').

Thus, while the linguistic links between the two texts are appealing (both deal with women, worry, and contrasting approaches to the Lord), on closer examination there are as many differences between the texts as similarities. One contrasts 'married women who worry about how to please their husbands' with 'unmarried women who worry about how to please the Lord'; the other contrasts Martha who worries about serving the Lord with Mary who sits listening to the Lord. One text works with a central contrast between married and unmarried women and a common activity of 'worrying,' the other works with a central contrast between listening and serving and a contrasting activity that opposes 'worrying' with 'choosing the good part.'

What makes Wenham's position more plausible (and at the same time more difficult to prove) is that a dependence of 1 Corinthians 7:32–35 on a Martha/Mary story is of course a dependence on an oral version of the story, not dependence on the literary form of the text as it appears in the Gospel of Luke, since the latter post-dates 1 Corinthians. It is, moreover, Paul's allusion to this story and/or his response to it as it is used by the women he addresses, rather than a direct citing of the story itself. Hence the differences between Luke 10 and 1 Corinthians 7 could be accounted for by allowing that the version of the story used by the women might have differed significantly from that incorporated by Luke; that Paul's advice might only use selected aspects of the story, or re-shape it to suit his purposes; and of course, that Luke might have similarly redacted the version which he has received.

It is possible, then, that a Martha/Mary story similar to the story in Luke 10:38–42 is recalled or addressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:32–35. Indeed, precisely if a story about Martha and Mary was used by early Christian women to justify their own practices, particularly in relation to ministry (for example remaining celibate or separating from their husbands, or engaging in διακονία as a matter of 'pleasing the Lord'), and if Luke did indeed have an agenda of removing women from leadership positions, then a re-telling of the Martha/Mary story with an ending that sets into the mouth of Jesus the decisive judgment that 'listening' is better than 'serving' could serve Luke's purpose well. In other words, it is possible that Luke used Jesus to silence the women who claimed the example of Martha as justification for their own practices. Since we have direct access neither to the Corinthian women, nor to any women addressed or envisaged by Luke, we can only guess at what they might have known already about Martha and Mary, what stories they might have told and whether they would have agreed with the version of the story told by Luke. Suffice it to observe that this reconstruction is consistent with the reconstruction of the Lukan context sketched earlier.

7.5.2 *Martha and the widows*

A similar theory for the rhetorical use of the Martha/Mary story prior to, or alongside, its inclusion in Luke's Gospel has been argued by Price (1997), who suggested that one of Luke's special sources is a source which he has derived from the communities of consecrated widows. This source explains why Luke includes more stories about widows than the other Gospels. Price claims that Luke includes the source with the specific intent of controlling the widows. Hence the stories are redacted to progressively remove the widows from positions of authority, to silence their prophetic speech and assign them the place of patrons who support the ministry and mission of the church financially, but who do not take leadership roles in that mission.

The conflict between the consecrated widows of the church and the developing church hierarchy, especially the monepiscopate, has been analysed particularly in relation to the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Methuen 1995; 1997; Penn 2001) and the Pastoral epistles (Bassler 1984; 1996; Brown 1992; Krause 1995; MacDonald 1999b), though in the latter case the debate continues on whether or not the widows already represent an 'order' within the early churches. Price bases his research substantially on Davies (1980), who proposed that the second- and third-century apocryphal Acts of the Apostles were composed and circulated among communities of consecrated widows, particularly because of the so-called 'chastity' or 'conversion' tales contained within them (on these see p. 10 n. 14; Kraemer 1980; Burrus 1986; 1987). Davies' theory has not received general acceptance because the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles demonstrably do not derive from the same author or group (MacDonald 1984; Bovon and Junod 1986; Kaestli 1990a; Schneemelcher 1992; Dunn 1993). Dennis MacDonald (1983; 1984) offers a more substantial argument for locating the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* among women storytellers. Nevertheless these women storytellers still cannot be identified with the consecrated widows of the early Church, first because the widow communities do not appear in this text (and occur only on the margins of all of the apocryphal Acts); second because the heroine in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, like the women in all the other conversion tales, is never called a widow, which at the very least suggests that if these stories are told by 'widow communities,' these women do not use the term 'widow' as a self-designation.[26]

Price (1997) includes the Martha/Mary pericope among his putative 'widow traditions'; however this attribution is unlikely, both because his research is founded on an unlikely reading of the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and because his hypothesis that the widows already existed as a group within the early Christian communities sufficiently organised to develop their own traditions and to form a 'force to be reckoned with' prior to the writing of the Gospel of Luke is tenuous. This is not to exclude the possibility that the Martha/Mary story was popular among women storytellers, or that Luke might tell the tale subversively to silence women—I have just raised a similar proposal in relation to 1 Corinthians 7. That these women should be 'widows,' however, much less consecrated widows living in communities, has not been argued convincingly by Price. It would require much more careful analysis of developing ministry terminology and structures to ensure later structures are not read inappropriately back into earlier communities, as well as a much more detailed and nuanced analysis of the widows in the early Church.

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[26] In the apocryphal *Acts of Peter*, at least, the widows and the rich patrons (such as the women of the chastity stories invariably are) are mutually exclusive categories (Stoops 1986), so that a 'widow' by definition could not be rich and, conversely, the rich women heroines of the conversion tales, in this text at least, cannot be 'widows.'

7.5.3 *Martha and the Good Samaritan*

One popular modern way of making sense of the text is to interpret it in light of the preceding parable about the Good Samaritan, with which it is paired in typical Lukan fashion of pairing stories about men with stories about women (though the pairing of the two stories has been questioned by Seim 1994a: 14; see also p. 189 n. 7). Whereas the parable of the Good Samaritan is a lesson in loving one's neighbour, the story of Martha and Mary is said to be a lesson in loving God; and the two stories together form a lesson on the great commandment (Caird 1963; Gill 1970; Marshall 1978: 450–451; Fitzmyer 1981: 2.892; Talbert 1982: 125; Goulder 1989: 493; Evans 1990; Alexander 1992; Kilgallen 2003). Wall (1989), following the suggestion of Evans (1955), reads the story and its context as a Christian re-reading of Deuteronomy, the Martha/Mary pericope forming an illustration of Deuteronomy 8:3. The original audience is intended to recognise Jesus as the new Moses and to learn that listening to him is the most important means of loving God (Wall 1989).

Much of the time the story would not have been heard in its current literary context, however. This is the case both in oral tradition and within a liturgical setting. The evidence suggests, moreover, that early Christian interpreters of the Martha/Mary pericope did not make the link with the preceding parable (see also Csányi 1960).

One second-century exegete who appears to make use of the immediate literary context in his interpretation is Clement of Alexandria (*Quis dives salvetur* 10). Clement connects the good part chosen by Mary with the eternal life at issue in the question, what must I do to inherit eternal life? which introduces the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25). He cites not the text of Luke, however, but rather Mark 10:17–31, and makes no reference to the parable of the Samaritan (Butterworth 1919: 290–291, see also 278–281). Thus, even in an instance where a patristic commentator refers to the literary context of the pericope, the connection with the parable of the Good Samaritan is not made and the 'literary context' involves Mark rather than Luke. Clearly early Christian interpreters do not engage in the task of exegesis in the way in which modern bibliophiles do. Much as the parable of the Good Samaritan now looms large in the interpretations of modern commentators, if it played any role at all in early Christian interpretations of the Martha/Mary pericope, it was a very minor one.

7.5.4 *Martha goes to church*

If literary context is much less significant for the interpretation of the narrative in the early Church, oral and liturgical contexts are much more significant. The nature of orality in makes this context extremely difficult to access; by definition it can be preserved only by translation into another (written) context. One possible oral setting for telling the tales has already been discussed (7.5.1). The liturgy of the early Church provides another oral context in which the narrative was encountered. It can be assumed that from the very beginning of its use in worship those churches which used this Gospel also read this particular pericope. Its reading in worship is certainly attested in later homiletical tradition, for example by Origen's *Fragment 171*, Augustine's *Homily* 53 and 54 and Cyril of Alexandria's *Homily* 69 (Csányi 1960). Since the pericope is fully self-contained and since it appears without the surrounding material in later lectionaries, it is plausible that from early on the pericope was read without its surrounding material.[27] This conclusion is also supported by the observation that patristic exegetes appear not to have been guided by the immediate literary context in their interpretation of Luke 10:38–42.

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[27] A comment is in order on the origin and dating of the lectionary system. Gregory (1909: 329–330) has suggested that the Sunday lectionary list developed as early as the first half of the second century (cf. Metzger 1972: 483). Such an early development of standardised lectionary readings at least in some churches would not be surprising if, as Guilding (1960: 5–23) argues, a lectionary system was already well established in the synagogues of Palestine by the first century; and all the more so if Guilding's other contention, that this lectionary forms the background for John's Gospel, also holds. On the other hand, Junack (1972) offers weighty evidence for dating the Byzantine lectionary no earlier than the seventh century. Others have argued that a lectionary system is presupposed already in the homilies of Chrysostom, Origen and Cyril (Metzger 1972: 483; against this see Junack 1972: 537–538). This debate over the origin and dating

Hearing the narrative without the preceding parable creates a different interpretive context. Moreover, in the Byzantine lectionary Luke 11:27–28 has been appended to Luke 10:38–42. This creates a completely different climax for the text, which thereby ends not with Jesus' pronouncement that "Mary has chosen the good part which will not be taken away from her" (10:42), but with his verdict that "blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (11:28). The original narrative had set up a contrast between Martha and Mary and excluded her in the verdict of Mary's part as 'the good part.' This new climax no longer leaves Mary's listening as the ultimate 'good part,' but rather includes both 'listening and doing' as that which is blessed. Insofar as Martha is considered to be the one 'doing' she is included in the blessing as the obedient one; and inasmuch as Mary is not said to be acting on the word she has heard, the blessing pronounced on her choice of the 'good part' is qualified. The last word is no longer that Mary has chosen the good part, but that those who hear and obey will be blessed. It has not been stated that either Mary or Martha meet this criterion. As such the opposition that favoured Mary over against Martha has effectively been undermined.[28]

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of the Byzantine lectionary concerns *standardised* lists of pericopes fixed for set days, which of course in no way implies that prior to the development of such standardised lists the Gospels were read in entirety in each worship service. It simply means that prior to the extant lectionaries we cannot be certain which pericopes were read in which order, on which days and in which church. Nor do we know the extent to which the selection of pericopes followed a fixed pattern (such as a one-year cycle) within an individual community or within a region. Of interest here, however, is not the extent to which the reading of Luke 10:38–42 was standardised in all churches (though this in itself is an interesting question), but whether there is evidence that Luke 10:38–42 was read at all in worship, and if so, whether—in the absence of definitive evidence—we ought to imagine this reading in worship as more likely occurring with, or without, the surrounding literary context.

[28] This differs from the interpretation of Bieberstein (1998) who used the link to 11:27–28 to argue that 'doing' is implicit in the 'listening' of Mary, for in that case the opposition between Mary and Martha is retained since it is only to Mary's listening that this putative obedience also accrues. She remains the one who has chosen 'the good part' over against Martha who has not chosen the good part. When the link is explicit, as in the lectionary, this is not the case.

Furthermore, the reading appears only on feast days of Mary Theotokos.[29] This coincidence radically changes the interpretation of the story, turning it into a story about Mary the mother of Jesus and her sister Martha. In such a liturgical setting the story is thus radically transformed. In effect Byzantine Christians who encountered the story in the liturgy can be expected to assume that Martha is the sister of Mary Theotokos. The evidence for this specific liturgical context is quite late—Junack (1972) finds no evidence for the Byzantine lectionary system prior to the eighth century, either in terms of extant lectionary manuscripts, or in marginal lectionary markings in *lectio continua* manuscripts, while C. R. Gregory had dated the lectionary as early as the second century and Metzger (1972: 495–496) proposed an origin in the fourth century (see n. 27 above). What this means is that evidence exists that these feast days of the Theotokos were established by the eighth century, and at this point at least, Luke 10:38–42 was read in this liturgical context three times each year: on the feasts of the birth of the Virgin (8 September), the entry of the Theotokos into the temple (21 November) and the Dormition (15 August, Gregory 1909: 366, 371, 383). How long this tradition of celebrating these particular feasts of the Theotokos had been established, and whether the practice of reading this text on these feasts developed concurrently with these feasts or was a later addition is not yet known.

While it cannot be assumed that this later Byzantine liturgical context reflects the liturgical contexts of the various churches of the first three centuries, it can and should be assumed that the liturgical context of the early Church is likely to have been at least as important as the literary context; and, I would suggest, even more so, at least for the majority of Christians who did not read, much less own, copies of the Gospels. Whereas modern exegetes are strongly predisposed to read and interpret the text in its current literary context, this context is by no means the only—and probably not even the most common—context in which early Christian readers and hearers of the story would have encountered it.

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[29] According to Gregory's listing of the Menologion from the early lectionary manuscripts, Luke 10:38–42 is read on the feasts of the birth of the Virgin (8 September), the entry of the Theotokos into the temple (21 November) and the Dormition (15 August; Gregory 1909: 366, 371, 383). Luke 10:38–42 is omitted in the Synaxarion, consistent with the practice of omitting texts in the *lectio continua* which are read on feast days. Similarly John 11:1–44 is read on Lazarus Saturday in the Synaxarion, but not on the feast day for the raising of Lazarus (16 March) in the Menologion (Gregory 1909: 362, 377). No separate feast day for Martha and/or Mary of Bethany appears. Consequently, in this early Byzantine lectionary, Martha appears only in association with the Theotokos, though the reverse is not the case: the Theotokos appears also without Martha (for example at Christmas and at the Annunciation).

One other parallel example of such a changed context may be noted here. The papyrus $\mathfrak{P}^3$, dating from the sixth or seventh century, includes Luke 7:36–45 on the recto and 10:38–42 on the verso, thus placing the Martha/Mary pericope adjacent to the narrative of the anointing. Whether this papyrus forms part of a lectionary or not is debated (see Birdsall 1963; Junack 1972: 504–515). If it is part of a lectionary it offers a different example of the way in which liturgical contexts influence interpretation. For even if the two texts were not read on the same day, they were presumably read in close proximity. It seems more likely, however, that the manuscript represents a private copy (so Junack 1972: 508). Who made such a copy? Why did they copy these two texts in particular? Should one imagine that the text was copied from a complete Gospel of Luke and the intervening text omitted? Or does the copy reflect some other original, for example the transcription of two stories heard orally? Where and how might such a private copy be used? Tantalising questions—but at the very least the existence of the papyrus fragment itself attests that in this instance, too, Luke 10:38–42 is not preserved, nor presumably interpreted, in its current canonical literary context.

7.5.5 *Mary and the rabbi*

Another interpretation, which used to be quite common among modern interpreters, sees in the ‘good part’ chosen by Mary an affirmation of women’s right to study and to be disciples. First-century Jewish women, so the argument goes, were not permitted to study Torah. Luke’s Jesus here takes a radical step in permitting a woman to become a disciple of a rabbi (so, for example, Parvey 1974: 141; Marshall 1978: 452; Tetlow 1980: 104; Witherington and Witherington 1990: 100; Seim 1994a: 102; 1994b: 745–746). Hence the story functioned as an apology for women’s education and discipleship. This interpretation has been discredited in modern scholarship (Davies 1991; Reid 1996: 149–154; Koperski 2002). The assumption that women could not study Torah is simplistic and based on inadequate historical methods that fall prey to assuming that later rabbinic tractates such as the Mishnah and Talmud reflect first-century Jewish praxis; that (men’s) literary depictions accurately reflect (women's) historical reality; and that first-century Judaism is a monolithic structure in which it is possible to make generalised statements about what 'women' were permitted to do. The fallacies in this approach have been exposed by Brooten (1981; 1985; 1986), Ilan (1995), Kraemer (1999a; 1999b) and Levine (1989; 2003).[30] Indeed, Davies (1991) notes that in the Gospels Jesus is frequently depicted teaching mixed groups of men and women (see also Koperski 2002). The presence of women in the synagogue is taken for granted without comment in Luke 13:10–17 (see also Mark 6:2–3 and its parallel, Mtt 13:56). Nor does the description of Mary match the standard depiction of the disciples, who are shown engaged in discussion, not simply sitting and listening (Lk 8:9; 10:25–37; 12:41; 13:23; Reid 1996: 153–154).

Like the interpretation of the Martha/Mary story in light of the parable of the Good Samaritan, this approach to the text as an affirmation of women's right to study is not an interpretation seen in patristic exegesis either. The text was seen as an affirmation of the importance of listening, of course, but the specifically gendered conclusions about women and discipleship were not drawn. Thus, for example, Cyril's *Homily* 69 charges hosts, but not specifically *women*, not to neglect the task of listening (Payne Smith 1983: 291–293). To my knowledge there is no patristic interpretation of this text contrasting Jewish and Christian women, or recognising in the approval of Mary the elevation of a woman to a discipleship status comparable to that of the male disciples.

7.5.6 *Martha and the prophets*

It was noted earlier that a number of modern exegetes focus on hospitality as the context and purpose for the story. Laland (1959), Brutschek (1986: 161–162) and Bieberstein (1998: 126–127) consider the story's original *Sitz im Leben* to be the hospitality offered to visiting prophets/evangelists. It serves as a warning to hosts not to miss the time of grace offered by the presence of the visiting prophet by being too distracted with the tasks of hospitality to hear the word which the prophet brings. The story may serve this function both within its current literary context, given the connections to the travel narrative outlined earlier; but can also function in this manner on its own.

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[30] See also Cotton (2002), who demonstrates in her study of the extant Jewish legal documents from the late first to early second century CE the remarkable extent to which Jewish society assimilated to its Hellenistic environment. She concludes (2002: 147) that the "discrepancies that we have detected between the law of the papyri and halakhic law seem to me to prove that what eventually came to be normative Jewish law had not yet become so" at the time of the papyri, that is between 50 and 135/136 CE.

Moreover, the story continues to serve this rhetorical purpose in some of the later patristic writings, particularly in ascetical writings. Thus Basil of Caesarea's Long Rules (*Regulae Fusius Tractae*) question 20, "the rule to be followed in serving meals to guests," invokes Luke 10 in its charge that Christians "act unfittingly in contriving menus which deviate in any important way from our usual diet" (Wagner 1950: 277; see also Csányi 1960: 28–29). In these ascetical texts the focus broadens to include not only the hosts, but also the guests. Thus Evagrius Ponticus reads in the story an exhortation to simplicity (PG 40.1253; Csányi 1960: 33). Similarly Cyril of Alexandria proposes Jesus as the model for the disciples—who are not to indulge themselves when they are received into homes, but are to "first sow for them things spiritual"—while Martha and Mary serve as contrasting models for the hosts (*Homily* 69; Payne Smith 1983: 292; see Csányi 1960: 49–54). Here, then, modern exegesis picks up an interpretation also current in the early Church. It is, however, by no means the most common way in which the story was interpreted and used. Far more common were allegorical/typological interpretations.

7.5.7 *Martha and Mary as types*

The most famous patristic interpretation of this pericope takes the two sisters as representatives of 'action' and 'contemplation,' an interpretation associated particularly with Origen.

> You might reasonably take Martha to stand for action (πρᾶξις) and Mary for contemplation (θεωρία). For, the mystery of love is lost to the active life unless one directs [one's] teaching, and [one's] exhortation to action, toward contemplation. For, there is no action without contemplation, or contemplation without action. (Origen fragment 171: Luke 10:38; Lienhard 1996: 192)

For Origen θεωρία is synonymous with γνῶσις and denotes an insight gained not through rational means, but by revelation. Πρᾶξις is virtuous living in service of others—in this instance πρᾶξις denotes teaching and preaching (so Bumpus 2000: 37). Csányi (1960: 17–19) suggests that Origen derived these categories not from Jewish or Christian scriptures, but from Hellenistic philosophy[31] but has transformed the philosophical understanding of πρᾶξις and θεωρία, first by considering θεωρία a gift of grace and second, by envisaging the ideal as the union of πρᾶξις and θεωρία rather than understanding these two as mutually incompatible and antithetical ways of life in which the contemplative life is to be preferred.[32]

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[31] Against this view Ockinga (1998) cites Sirach 38:24–39:11 and the much earlier

Csányi (1960: 22) notes a further antithesis in the same fragment between the perfected and the imperfect Christian in which Martha receives the Word σωματικώτερον in contrast to Mary who hears it πνευματικῶς: ἡ Μάρθα σωματικώτερον ὑπεδέξατο τὸν λόγον…ἡ δε Μαρία πνευματικῶς ἤκουεν αὐτοῦ (Rauer 1959: 298). The contrast is between physical and spiritual hearing, implying a greater perfection for Mary.[33] This typology of the incomplete/complete Christian matches the typology πρᾶξις/θεωρία (so Csányi 1960), though this representation nevertheless is only *pars pro toto*, insofar as for Origen the perfected life is always the unity of both contemplative *and* active life. Indeed, Origen himself interprets sitting 'at his feet' as an indication that Mary had not yet been perfected.

Csányi further suggests that understanding Martha and Mary as ultimately types of the imperfect and the perfected Christian resolves another apparent inconsistency in Origen's interpretation, which suggests on the one hand that the 'good part' chosen by Mary is θεωρία while on the other hand that which will not be taken from her is the 'mystery of love.' Both of these belong to the life of the perfected Christian. The same antithesis is the foundation for the other comparisons which Origen draws in the same fragment, interpreting Martha as 'the synagogue of circumcision' and Mary as 'the Church of the

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Egyptian *Satire of Trades*. But it is not at all clear that the two texts actually share more than a surface similarity; that Sirach (much less the Egyptian *Satire* from around 2000 BCE) in fact draws the same contrast as Origen and/or the Hellenistic philosophers. Moreover Sirach shows influence of Hellenism, therefore the presence of this theme here could well represent Hellenistic as much as Jewish thought.

[32] See also Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 12.41, which contrasts Peter as the one loving the contemplative life (τὸν θεωρητικόν γε ἀγαπήσας ὁ Πέτρος βίον) with Jesus who refuses to stay on the mount of transfiguration.

[33] The antithesis σωματικώτερον/πνευματικῶς is difficult to render: Csányi opts for translating the first term as "fleischlich," though noting that σῶμα refers to body rather than flesh, emphasising the distinction between the simple ("einfach") and perfected ("vollkommen") Christian. Lienhard renders σωματικώτερον 'somatically':

> But we should rather say that Martha received the word more somatically, in her house—that is in her soul—whereas Mary heard it spiritually, even if she sat 'at his feet.' (1996: 192)

Gentiles'; or Martha as Jewish Christians and Mary as Gentile Christians (Csányi 1960: 24–27; Bumpus 2000: 37–42).[34]

A similar distinction appears to underlie Augustine's interpretation of the pericope, for he writes,

> that in these two women the two lives are figured, the life present, and the life to come, the life of labour, and the life of quiet, the life of sorrow, and the life of blessedness, the life temporal, and the life eternal. (Sermon 54.4; *NPNF I* 6.430)

More specifically it is the church in the present and the church eternal, the two divided temporally (in contrast to Origen. See Csányi 1960: 65–74):

> What Martha was doing, that we are now; what Mary was doing, that we hope for. Let us do the first well, that we may have the second fully. (Sermon 54.4; *NPNF I* 6.430)

Indeed, sermon 53 and 54,[35] both dealing with this pericope, reveal a fondness for Martha, as well as the consistent interpretation of the part of Mary as 'better' (rather than 'good'), in contrast to Martha's part which is explicitly not 'bad' (Sermon 53.5). Martha's 'labour' entails both work and suffering, both concepts being expressed in the Latin 'labor.' The work is compassion and mercy; and the life is "full of sorrows, by fears subdued, by temptations disquieted" (Sermon 53.6; *NPNF I* 6.428–429). Finally Augustine sees in the 'one thing necessary' the unity of heart and mind of Christians with each other and with God, "that celestial Oneness, the Oneness in which the Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit are One" (Sermon 53.4 *NPNF I* 6.428).

Ephrem the Syrian may be noted in passing here, not so much for a typological interpretation of the story, but for revealing a similar fondness for Martha; indeed his interpretation is noteworthy particularly for rating Martha's love as more fervent than Mary's.

> *Mary came and sat at his feet.* This was as though she were sitting upon firm ground at the feet of him who had forgiven the sinful woman her sins. For she had put on a crown in order to enter into the kingdom of the First-Born. *She had chosen the better portion*, the Benefactor, the Messiah himself alone, as it is said, *It will never be taken away from her.*

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[34] Cyril of Alexandria draws a similar comparison between Rachel and Leah, seeing Leah as the synagogue of the Jews and Rachel as the church of the Gentiles (PG 68.237).

[35] These sermons are numbered 103 and 104 in the Benedictine edition.

> Martha's love was more fervent than Mary's, for before he had arrived there, she was ready to serve him, *Do you not care for me, that you should tell my sister to help me?* When he came to raise Lazarus to life, she ran and came out first. (*Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron* 8.15; McCarthy 1993: 153)

The typological interpretation of the story has been very influential (see Solignat and Donnat 1980). A story which is already flexible as a result of the ambiguity inherent in such terms as διακονία, πολλά and ἑνός becomes capable of being filled with a multitude of allegorical meanings. Even more interesting, in terms of rhetorical uses of the story, is the use of the text in the Messalian controversy.

7.5.8 *In the hands of the Messalians*

The Messalian controversy concerns a fourth- and fifth-century ascetical movement with a focus particularly on prayer[36] which was condemned as heretical by several local synods and finally at the third ecumenical council in 431 CE (Staats 1992). Stewart (1991) identifies it as originally a Syrian movement which spread to Asia Minor and was viewed with suspicion there, she suggests, to a large extent because of misunderstanding of its unfamiliar terminology. Identifying a specific group of Messalians is rendered difficult by the fact that

> the term 'Messalian' became a perjorative epithet applied to any group of ascetics or monks who seemed to have a less than hearty enthusiasm for manual labour or the sacramental ordinances of the Church, or who placed an emphasis on 'experiential' aspects of prayer. (Stewart 1991: 3)

For our purposes the task of identifying 'true' Messalians from such a broader definition is irrelevant, since the interest here is solely in the use of Luke 10:38–42 within the controversy—be it by 'true' Messalians, or by others associated with them in the minds of their opponents, or by the opponents of this 'Messalian heresy.'

One of the key doctrines ascribed to the Messalians, and condemned by their opponents, was an avoidance of manual labour coupled with a refusal to give alms, on the basis that they themselves were the truly 'poor in spirit' (Stewart 1991: 262–265). This shunning of work was justified by scripture, particularly John 6:27. Thus Epiphanius chides the Messalians that

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[36] The Syriac word Messalians literally means "people who pray," as Epiphanius explains in his *Panarion* 80.1.2 (Williams 1987–94: 2.629).

> the saying of the Savior, 'Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life,' has given some a wrong notion. They believe that 'the meat that perishes' is the honest labor <by> which we possess its product righteously. (*Pan.* 80.4.4; Williams 1987–94: 2.632)

Indeed, it is precisely in his homily on John 6:26–27 that Chrysostom broaches the theme of those who refuse to work and defend this refusal theologically.

> Since some who wish to live without working misapply this statement [do not labour for food that perishes] by saying that Christ was renouncing manual labor, it is timely to speak also against them. They are slandering the whole of Christianity, so to speak, and laying it open to be ridiculed for laziness. But first we ought to quote the words of Paul. And what does he say? 'Remember the Lord who said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."' Yet, from what source would he who possessed nothing be able to give?
>
> How is it, then, that Jesus said to Martha: 'Thou art anxious and troubled about many things; and yet only one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the best part'? And again: 'Do not be anxious about tomorrow'? It is indeed necessary to explain all these texts now, not only in order that we may cause those who are lazy to cease to be so—if they should be open to persuasion—but also that we may prove that no statements made by God contradict one another. (*Homily* 44; Goggin 1957: 443–444)

Chrysostom's remarks fit well with the characterisation of the Messalians, not only in relation to Epiphanius' citation of their use of John 6:27, but also in relation to the charge that they refuse to give alms. In this instance Acts 20:35 (the example of Paul) serves as a rebuttal: if Paul, though possessing 'nothing' is able to give, so should those addressed here by Chrysostom. He then proceeds to cite two further texts, Luke 10:38–42 and Matthew 6:34, which, he claims, must be explained "in order that we may cause those who are lazy to cease to be so." Thus these two texts also belong in the theological arsenal of Chrysostom's opponents. Against their interpretation Chrysostom avers that Luke 10:38–42 chides not work itself, but Martha's failure to recognize the time (καιρός) for hearing the word. Furthermore, it is not labour, but laziness, which is working for the food that perishes, since idleness teaches much evil (Goggin 1957: 445).

An interest in the Lukan pericope is apparent in the *Great Letter* of Pseudo-Macarius, one of the texts which has been associated with the Messalians (Stewart 1991: 5–8; Plested 2004: 16–27). It reads,

> The Lord himself testifies that the jointly completed work of prayer and proclamation is set above every virtue and commandment. For when he entered the house of Martha and Mary, Martha on the one hand was busy with serving, but Mary sat by the feet of the Lord and nourished her soul with the saving teaching. But she was blamed by Martha because she did not assist her, so she said to the Lord, 'Lord, say that my sister should come to help me, because she has left me alone'. Yet the Lord judged the first more important above the secondary when he said to her, "Martha, Martha you are worried and agitated about many things, but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the good part."
>
> The Lord indicated the first and greater of the virtuous works saying thus. Yet he did not consider the work of serving nothing. For if it were nothing, how is it that he participated in the same service as Martha and indeed fulfilled the same work himself when he washed the feet of the disciples? Also he exhorted them, 'If then I, the Lord and teacher, have washed the feet of you disciples, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done for you.' And again, 'Let the one who wishes to be first among you be the servant and slave of all, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many' and 'as anyone has done for one of these, they have done it for me' and 'the one who welcomes a righteous person in the name of righteousness will receive the reward of the righteous.' So also the apostles in *Acts*, busied with the physical (σωματικήν) serving at table, preferred the greater: to pursue the work of prayer and proclamation. "For it is not right," they said, "for us to leave the word of God in order to serve at tables. But let us set up elected men filled with the Holy Spirit to fulfil this need, and we will attend to the work of preaching and prayer." So you may see how they set the first above the secondary, even though both are shoots from the one good root. (cf. Jaeger 1954: 287–289; Csányi 1960: 42–46)

A saying of the Desert Fathers recounts the story of a visitor who came to see Abba Sylvanus and, upon seeing the brothers working, said, "Do not labour for the food which perishes (John 6:27). Mary has chosen the good portion (Luke 10:42)" (Ward 1975: 187). In response the visitor was given a book and placed in a cell. When he was not called for the meal, the visitor went to inquire of Abba Sylvanus whether the brothers had eaten, and, upon finding that they had, asked why he was not called for the meal. The old man replied,

> because you are a spiritual man and do not need that kind of food. We, being carnal, want to eat and that is why we work. But you have chosen the good portion and read the whole day long and you do not want to eat carnal food.

The saying concludes, "Mary needs Martha. It is really thanks to Martha that Mary is praised" (ibid.).

Both the *Great Letter* and the saying of the Desert Fathers derive from an ascetical milieu. Both concur that the Lukan Martha/Mary story has been used to renounce work. Yet in each case the interpretation is moderate, indeed moderating. What makes this use of the Lukan Martha/Mary story interesting for our purposes is first of all that Martha's διακονία has here been extended to encompass not just hospitality, but all work. In this it differs from the use of the text in other ascetical writings where the text served as an exhortation against becoming distracted with the work of hospitality, but, more importantly, as an exhortation to simplicity on part of both hosts and guests (disciples). Again the significance, or lack thereof, of gender is noteworthy: the text is not used to discourage *women's* work, but all work. The gender of the actors in the story is significant neither for the ascetics who use it to disparage work, nor for those countering their exegesis. Pseudo-Macarius in particular makes no distinction between the διακονία of Martha and that of Jesus and of the apostles and the seven in Acts 6:1–7. Finally the use of the text within the Messalian controversy illustrates well the rhetorical flexibility of the text: it is used both to reject work and to rehabilitate—even praise—it (as in the saying of the Desert Fathers).

7.6 Conclusions

Martha appears as a woman engaged in διακονία. The meaning of the word and the interpretation of the story in Luke 10:38–42 have been a matter of intense debate. Is this a story about fussing over a meal or about anxiety over ministry? I have suggested that in fact there is a plurality of stories, attested not only in the range of text-variants within the manuscript tradition, but also in the range of interpretations that have been offered. There is an openness to the narrative and to the language (in particular the language of διακονία/διακονεῖν) that provides flexibility and renders the story useful for a broad range of rhetorical purposes: to discourage excess in hospitality (Basil of Caesarea) or work in general (the Messalians) or to encourage it (the Desert Fathers); to contrast action with contemplation and the imperfect with the perfected Christian (Origen) or the present life with the life to come (Augustine). That the story was put to such a broad range of purposes and was told and retold with a range of endings attests the significance of the narrative in early Christian tradition. This popularity of the tale has implications for the significance of Martha: if the story was well-known, so was she. Since it could serve a variety of rhetorical purposes, so could she.

Did some early Christian women use Martha stories to support their choice of celibacy, as Wenham (1995: 246–250) has suggested on the basis of the linguistic links between Luke 10:38–42 and 1 Corinthians 7:32–35? Were these stories told by widows or other women to justify their ministries? Neither possibility can be proven. Both draw attention to the difficulty of hearing women's interpretations. The voices of the 'fathers' have been preserved; the ways in which the 'mothers,' 'sisters,' 'wives' and 'widows' told and interpreted the stories are lost or hidden among textual witnesses whose authorship is uncertain.

Many modern strategies of interpretation find no counterpart among the early witnesses; the reading of this story as a pair with the preceding parable of the Good Samaritan as a case in point. Conversely, hearing the narrative in the context of worship radically changes its meaning, both because the lectionary adds a completely different climax that, in effect, subverts the dominical saying of 10:41–42 by appending 11:27–28, and because it sets the narrative in the context of feasts of Mary Theotokos and thereby implies that this story about 'Mary' and Martha is about Mary the Godbearer. In the developing cult of the Virgin in the Church, such an association of Martha with Mary the mother of Jesus has the potential to elevate her status significantly. While there are few obvious clues that this association spread beyond the reading of the Lukan pericope on feasts of the Theotokos (Martha does not appear in later narratives concerning the Theotokos, such as the Dormition, for example), this is an intriguing possibility.

Finally, what can be said for the feminist reading of the Martha/Mary narrative as a story that

> pits the apostolic women of the Jesus movement against each other and appeals to a revelatory word of the resurrected Lord in order to restrict women's ministry and authority…to silence women leaders of house-churches who, like Martha, might have protested, and simultaneously extol Mary's 'silent' and subordinate behavior? (Schüssler Fiorenza 1993: 186)

In terms of the patristic exegesis of the narrative it appears to find no support at all: none of the texts and interpretations surveyed here use the narrative to restrict women's ministry in this manner or make any attempt to counter such a use. Nor do the interpretations pay attention to the gendered aspect of the narrative. It seems not to make any difference to the exegetes that the narrative uses women rather than men to make its point.

Does this mean that this reading must be rejected as 'feminist fantasy' if it proposes itself as a historical reconstruction of the circumstances that gave rise to the text? Not quite: first, because later interpretations of the text need not negate earlier interpretations. It is possible that the text had a rhetorical function in the earliest Christian communities which disappeared as the structure of these earliest communities changed. This, afterall, is precisely Schüssler Fiorenza's point: that the Christian churches experienced a fundamental change in the first century in which an earlier radical equality between men and women in the fledgling movement gave way to patriarchal structures in which women were once again subordinated to men (see especially Schüssler Fiorenza 1983). Given the difficulty of reconstructing the earliest communities and the radical changes that occurred in the first centuries, it need hardly be surprising that a text that was once used over the struggles in the leadership of women in the church and at the Eucharist was no longer interpreted in this way once such leadership of women was suppressed or marginalised. It might indicate merely that the rhetoric changed: that different arguments were used in later battles over women's leadership (in the context of the Montanist controversy, for example) than had been used in earlier struggles. Second, there is at least one other early Christian text in which Martha's διακονία is set precisely in the context of Eucharistic ministry in order to make a point about the participation of women *as women* in such a ministry. It is to this text, the *Apostolic Church Order*, that I turn next.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A EUCHARISTIC MINISTRY FOR MARTHA: THE *APOSTOLIC CHURCH ORDER* AND THE *ACTS OF PHILIP*

The analysis of the connection of Martha to διακονία in Luke 10:38–42 and its interpretation in the early Church demonstrated the flexibility of the narrative and its use for a range of rhetorical purposes. Even so the use of the narrative to support or prohibit a Eucharistic ministry for women in the manner proposed by Schüssler Fiorenza could not be substantiated from extant patristic exegesis of the text. Two other, non-canonical narratives link Martha to διακονία, the *Apostolic Church Order* (*ACO*) and the *Acts of Philip* (*A. Phil.*). While the connection of Martha's διακονία to questions of the participation of women in the Eucharist remained a matter of debate in the case of Luke, in the *ACO* it becomes explicit. Furthermore, the *ACO* and *Acts of Philip* reveal radically different attitudes towards Martha's διακονία.

8.1 The nature and function of church orders

This study has already examined a broad range of different materials including Gospel narratives, sermons, hymns and images. The *Apostolic Church Order* represents yet another different genre of text and consequently raises new issues of interpretation. Like Gospels, church orders are living literature, notorious both for emendation over time and for the incorporation of a range of different materials, such as catechetical and liturgical materials. The *ACO*, for example, has two distinct sections: a catechetical section (chap. 4–14) that adapts the 'Two Ways' known from the *Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and a 'church order' (chap. 15–30), which contains regulations for various offices in the community. Besides these, there is also an introduction (chap. 1–3) that presents a fictive setting for the church order reminiscent of the fictive setting of the *Epistula Apostolorum*. As in the *Epistula*, the apostles are gathered as a college to give instructions to the whole church. All the instructions of the *ACO* are set in the mouths of the apostles in the format 'John said… Peter said…'

Attributing texts to apostles is a common strategy for claiming authority for a text, as is the setting of a text in a fictitious gathering of the apostles after the resurrection. In the first three centuries local Christian communities were still quite independent, more global synodical authority structures not yet having developed. While these local communities needed to solve novel problems, the church's self-understanding as a united body also meant that the resultant increasing local divergence produced friction, as for example in the paschal controversy. Schöllgen (1996: 96–97) suggests that church orders emerged in this tension between local autonomy and the search for more global authority. Their claim to authority is based on the apostles whom they claim as authors and speakers—the only recourse, suggests Schöllgen, for early Christian writers seeking to make binding regulations beyond local borders.

As is the case elsewhere, the question needs to be asked how these texts reflect the historical context from which they emerged. While traditionally church orders were taken as records of the praxis of the churches from which they derived, more recent scholarship has suggested that the ideal envisaged by the texts might reflect historical reality better by contrast than by simple mirroring. Commenting on the canon laws of the ecclesiastical synods, Laeuchli observes that

> scholarship which examines the texts in relation to earlier, contemporary, and subsequent texts, treating them as if they were explicit renderings of what the church believed and enacted at the time, does not suffice, no matter how minutely it is done. It fails to offer meaningful explanations for many of the extraordinary inconsistencies in what seem to be naïve and simple canonical decisions...The failure is due to a basic misunderstanding as to what such texts represent. Time and again, they have been treated as abstract legal statements with a given, static meaning. What if they were not static legal formulations, but end products of violent group clashes, the last verbalized stage in a series of events, namely the conciliar debates, and behind them the tumultuous history of...Christianity? (1972: 4)

The same question has been asked of the church orders: do these texts represent records of early church life or rather 'Tendenzschriften' (Schöllgen 1997: 57), writings which seek to correct abuses or find new regulations for changed circumstances (Schöllgen 1996: 109)? Are church orders *descriptions* of current church practices or *prescriptions* of an ideal envisaged by their editors (Penn 2001: 6; Bradshaw 2002a: 93–97; cf. Methuen 1995)?

This question is central for the interpretation of the texts. First, it is central for the question how comprehensively the texts mirror church life. It has sometimes been deduced, implicitly or explicitly, that silence of a church order on a certain praxis, office or doctrine indicates that this praxis, office or doctrine was not yet (or no longer) in existence. If church orders are comprehensive mirrors of congregational life, then such a deduction is valid. If they are situational writings that react to certain abuses or to current questions, then such a deduction is invalid (Schöllgen 1997; Cooper and Maclean 1902: 25). Second, if church orders represent an attempt to influence, rather than reflect, current church praxis, to reform perceived abuses to an ideal norm, then the texts might serve as evidence not so much for the practices they advocate, but precisely for their opposite (so, for example, Methuen 1995; Penn 2001).

While Steimer (1992) has recently advocated the traditional interpretation of church orders as comprehensive mirrors of church life, Schöllgen (1997) shows the shortfalls of this argument. The *ACO* explicitly identifies 'the Scriptures' (αἱ γραφαί) as the basis for church life to which the text adds apostolic commands (chap. 15). This implies that it is matters which cannot be settled by recourse to the Scriptures which are the concern of the text, while matters that can be settled by the Scriptures can therefore be omitted. Schöllgen (1997: 67, 70–76) further suggests that the use of pseudepigraphy in the church orders speaks against unanimous acceptance on the part of the intended recipients, as well as against considering their authors authorised representatives writing on behalf of their communities. While a common strategy among early Christian writers, pseudepigraphy was not universally considered legitimate and justified (Tertullian, *de bapt.* 17.4, Eusebius *HE* 6.12.2–6; see Steimer 1992: 336–363; Pokorný 1997: 651–652; Wolter 1997). Given the suggestion of Tertullian, that the forger of the *Acts of Paul* was deposed from his position (*de bapt.* 17.4),[1] Schöllgen rightly asks on what basis one might propose that a bishop or other authorised representative would expose himself to such a danger, if he were merely fulfilling a task required of him.

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[1] Rordorf (1990: 153) has pointed out that 'was deposed' is not in fact a correct translation of *loco decessisse*, which is not in the passive voice. However Hilhorst suggests that such a translation accurately reflects the situation: that the "presbyter resigned, but under protest...because otherwise he would have been deposed by others" (1996: 157).

This recognition of the nature of church orders invites a rhetorical reading attentive to the conflicts and debates to which the text is reacting. At the same time, church orders are 'living literature' (Bradshaw 2002a: 91–92), constantly in the process of emendation and adaptation to changing circumstances. In particular in the churches of the East, these orders continued to be copied and gathered into larger collections such as the *Clementine Octateuch* and the Alexandrian *Sinodos*.[2] These later collections do not merely represent 'copies' or 'translations' but reflect the changing practices of the churches. As such, it is not only the Greek original version that is interesting, but also the way in which the text has been modified in the process of translation and incorporation into some of these later collections.

8.2 The Apostolic Church Order

The *Apostolic Church Order* has received only limited scholarly attention in comparison with its more famous sisters, the *Didache*, the *Apostolic Tradition* and the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. This Cinderella status is surprising, given both its great age and its high status in the churches particularly of Egypt, where it appears in first place in the collection of canon law (Cooper and Maclean 1902: 12; Tattam 1848).[3] Moreover, the *Apostolic Church Order* offers some fascinating peculiarities, such as a bishop who may be illiterate, while the reader must be not only literate but possess exegetical skills (16.2; see Faivre 1981). Even more intriguing is the inclusion of Martha and Mary, not only because they are the only figures besides the twelve apostles to participate in the discussion, but because the text places them at the Last Supper and uses their behaviour at the Supper (specifically that of Mary) as a precedent for regulating women's leadership at the Eucharist.

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[2] The *ACO* appears in Latin translation in the Fragmentum Veronense where it follows the *Didascalia* and precedes the *Apostolic Tradition* (Steimer 1992: 108); in the Alexandrian *Sinodos*, where it assumes first place (ibid.: 137), and in the *Clementine Octateuch*, where it appears as book three in the Syriac version, book two in the Arabic and in first place in the Bohairic version (ibid.: 144).

[3] Stewart-Sykes (2006:1) suggests the reason for the waning interest in the *Apostolic Church Order* was Harnack's judgement that, while containing earlier sources, the final redaction of the *ACO* was late and secondary (see also Harnack [1886] 1991a: 193–209; Schöllgen 1997: 56).

Research on the *Apostolic Church Order* is further complicated by the confusion over its naming in the scholarly literature: German scholars tend to refer to it as the *Apostolische Kirchenordnung* following Bickell's (1843) designation, but use the acronym CEA from the Latin designation *Constitutio ecclesiastica apostolorum* used by Vatican II. English scholars likewise designate it *Apostolic Church Order*. French scholars, conversely, have used a range of names including *Constitution apostolique égyptienne*, *Constitution apostolique de l'église* or *Règlement apostolique*, *Canons apostoliques* or *Constitution de l'église apostolique*, and *Ordonnance apostolique*. Hilgenfeld (1866) used the title *Duae viae vel iudicium Petri*, a title derived from Rufin of Aquileia, and Achelis suggests as original Greek title κανόνες ἐκκλησιαστικοὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων (for a complete discussion see Steimer 1992: 60–63).

The Greek text of the *ACO* was first published by Bickell (1843) and subsequently a number of times in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Lagarde 1856; Pitra 1864; Hilgenfeld 1866; Harnack [1886] 1991a; Funk 1887; Schaff 1889; and Schermann [1914–16] 1968; see also Leclercq 1925: 1926). There are also Syriac, Ethiopic, Bohairic, Sahidic, Arabic and Latin versions (see Harnack [1886] 1991a: 193–214; Tidner 1963; Arendzen 1901a: 59; Horner 1904; Quasten 1950: 119–120; Schermann [1914–16] 1968). Recently a new edition of the *ACO* with English translation has been published by Alistair Stewart-Sykes (2006). The edition used here is that of Schermann ([1914–16] 1968: 12–34). The edition and translation by Stewart-Sykes has been used for comparison purposes.

The only complete Greek manuscript of the *ACO* (*hist. Græce.* olim 45, n. 7) dates from the twelfth century.[4] There is a much earlier Latin text, the Fragmentum Veronense, dating to the eighth century. Hauler, who published the manuscript, suggests that this Latin translation was made from a Greek 'Vorlage' in the second half of the fourth century (Steimer 1992: 112–113). This Latin text thus provides a very early witness to the text of the *ACO* including the portion of the text of interest here.

Given the tendency to editorial activity in church orders, scholarship on these orders, like scholarship on the Gospels, has paid meticulous attention to the deciphering of various strata of materials within the texts and their redaction over time. In particular, scholars have sought to determine how the 'Two Ways' material in the first section of the *ACO* is related to other documents in which this material appears: the *Didache*, the *Epistle of Barnabas* and a document extant in three manuscripts that calls itself ἐπιτομὴ ὅρων τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων, 'epitome of the canons of the holy apostles.'[5] Similarly, there have been several proposals for unearthing sources beneath the second half of the *ACO* (chap. 15–30) in which Martha appears. Here Harnack ([1886] 1991b) had deduced two further distinct sources, one behind chapters 16–21 and the other behind chapters 22–28,[6] while Bartlet (1943: 103) proposed a single ancient source, which had, however, been redacted by two later editors.[7]

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[4] Two other manuscripts contain parts of the Greek text (Ottoboni 408 from the fourteenth century and Moscouensis from the tenth century), however neither contains chapters 16–28, which are of interest here. For a description of the manuscripts see Leclercq (1925).

These source-critical proposals are discussed in detail by Stewart-Sykes (2006), who offers his own complex source-critical hypothesis. For the purposes here it is worth noting that a number of source-critical proposals have been raised in relation to the vignette concerning Martha and Mary. It has been suggested, for example, that the text preserves an apocryphal Gospel narrative (Baumstark 1913), draws on a source used also by the canonical Gospels (Goetz 1921), or that it incorporates a dialogue drawn from second-century conflicts with gnostic groups (Stewart-Sykes 2006). Since these proposals speak both to the nature of the Martha tradition preserved in this text and to its rhetorical function I will return to them after examining the text in detail.

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[5] While it had been assumed that the first part of the *ACO* uses the *Didache* (Harnack [1886] 1991a: 208–212; Schermann [1914–16] 1968: 597–598), it has now become apparent that the Two Ways circulated independently and that the form of the Two Ways in the *ACO* represents "an earlier stage of the Two Ways than does the present form in the Didache" (Sandt and Flusser 2002: 65, 74–80; see also Niederwimmer 1998: 13–14; Prostmeier 1999: 52, n. 70; Stewart-Sykes 2006: 13). There are also connections with the *Epistle of Barnabas*, most likely through the use of a common source (Steimer 1992: 64; Prostmeier 1999: 53–54; Stewart-Sykes 2006: 29). The Two Ways material appears in a catechetical (baptismal) context in the *Didache* but is transformed into instruction for leaders in *Barnabas* (Draper 1995) and instruction for the clergy in the *ACO* (Stewart-Sykes 2006: 19–20). The suggestion that the teacher is also the baptiser (*ACO* 12) points to an early date for this source, since Stewart-Sykes (2006: 25) points out that from the early third century baptism was normally performed by the bishop, irrespective of who had prepared the candidate.

[6] The basis for this distinction rests primarily on the 'repeated' description of the duties of deacons (*ACO* 20, 22), but also on the use of the title διδάσκαλος for Jesus (*ACO* 22.2; 26.1), who is designated κύριος in the rest of the *ACO*. Harnack's source-critical conclusions are refuted by Funk (1887: LIV–LV) on the basis that that *ACO* 22 is not a repetition of chapter 20, but are accepted by Schermann ([1914–16] 1968: 600) and Hennecke (1921: 246–247). Stewart-Sykes agrees that *ACO* 20 and 22 use a different grammatical form and "that the doublet is clumsy as well as repetitive, and is indicative therefore of some redactional activity" (2006: 39). Similarly, in the discussion of the presbyters, John's suggestion that two presbyters should be appointed is refuted by the other apostles who demand three. Here, too, Stewart-Sykes detects redactional intervention (see also Faivre 1992). Rather than the integration of two independent sources as Harnack had suggested, Stewart-Sykes (2006: 45) favours a redactional composition in which material is interpolated into a single source. The use of the title διδάσκαλος indicates that both chapter 20 and the introduction to the vignette involving Martha and Mary in chapter 22 derive from the hand of the redactor of the *ACO*.

[7] For a review see Stewart-Sykes (2006: 40–45) who finds no evidence for a second redactor and consequently proposes a single redactor who joined and edited two sources. A similar proposal is put forward by Lemoine (1999), who suggests that the *ACO* was extended in sections in different centuries over the second and third century, a theory which Stewart Sykes (2006) considers too simple because it fails to account for the signs of expansion.

Estimations of the date of composition for the *ACO* span from as early as 140–180 CE for one of the sources (Harnack [1886] 1991b: 55–56)[8] to as late as 360 CE (for a review see Leclercq 1925: 1928). Current scholarship tends to date the *ACO* in its final form at the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century (Faivre 1981: 32; 1992: 23; Bradshaw 2002a: 89; Steimer 1992: 65).[9] Cooper and Maclean propose, however, that "it must reproduce a Church Order of an age earlier than Tertullian, as it places readers before deacons" (1902: 12). The *ACO*'s complex source and redaction history also means that theories of provenance must reckon with the complicating factor that sources from different provenances have been combined. Thus, for example, Bartlet (1943: 99–105) posits an original text from the early third century which was written in Asia Minor and revised there at the end of the third century, but received its final redaction in Egypt in the fourth century.[10] Harnack's arguments for dating the final redaction of the *ACO* in the fourth century are examined and refuted by Stewart Sykes who, on the basis of his source-critical analysis, concludes that

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[8] Harnack judges the final redaction of the *ACO* to be no earlier than 300 CE ([1886] 1991b: 6).

[9] Harnack ([1886] 1991a: 201) claims as an argument for an early origin of the *ACO* a quote by Clement of Alexandria, who cites a sentence from *ACO* 11.1 almost word for word in *Strom.* 1.20.100 (Schermann [1914–16] 1968: 19; compare Ferguson 1991: 98). This same text appears also in *Did.* 3.5, however, and it is by no means clear that Clement is citing one rather than the other (see Niederwimmer 1998: 6–7).

Clement of Alexandria	*ACO*	*Didache*
φησὶ γοῦν·	Ναθαναὴλ εἶπεν·	
«υἱέ,	τέκνον,	τέκνον μου,
μὴ γίνου ψεύστης·	μὴ γίνου ψεύστης,	μὴ γίνου ψεύστης
ὁδηγεῖ γὰρ τὸ ψεῦσμα	ἐπειδὴ ὁδηγεῖ τὸ ψεῦσμα	ἐπειδὴ ὁδηγεῖ τὸ ψεῦσμα
πρὸς τὴν κλοπήν.»	ἐπὶ τὴν κλοπήν.	εἰς τὴν κλοπήν

[10] An origin in Asia Minor had also been proposed by Maclean (1910: 26) on the basis of the primacy of John in the list of apostles.

> all the sources employed [by the *ACO*] are of the second century, and are either Syrian or Asian. The language points to the early part of the third century, and nothing obliges us to see this as later. (2006: 75)

He proposes 200–235 CE as "a reasonable suggestion" for the final redaction of the church order (2006: 78).

While this proposal for dating the *ACO* may well be accurate, the confidence with which Stewart-Sykes asserts (2006: 78–79) that Egypt is not the area of provenance for either the *ACO* or its sources fails to convince. Egypt continues to be recognised as a possible place of provenance for the *Didache* (Richardson 1953: 165; Kraft 1965: 77; Niederwimmer 1998: 53 n. 73) as well as for *Barnabas* (see Paget 1994: 30–42), both of whom share common sources with the *ACO*. The curious and unique reference to gendered demons in the *ACO* (anger is said to be a male demon and lust a female demon in *ACO* 7–8.1) also points to an Egyptian provenance. For as both Stewart-Sykes (2006: 31) and König and Lößl (1996) observe, the closest parallel to this idea appears in Clement of Alexandria (*Strom*. 3.93.1; compare 3.63). In countering an interpretation of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* of Cassianus, Clement observes that Cassianus has misunderstood the saying in the Gospel, failing to understand that "the male impulse is wrath but the female is desire" (θυμὸν μὲν ἄρρενα ὁρμήν, θήλειαν δὲ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, 3.93.1; Stählin 1970: 2.238; cf. ἔστι γὰρ δαιμόνιον ἀρρενικὸν ὁ θυμός…Ἔστι γὰρ θηλυκὸν δαιμόνιον ἡ ἐπιθυμία, *ACO* 7–8.1). Here the *ACO* is clearly operating in a similar thought-world to Clement of Alexandria. It therefore appears best to remain open on the question of provenance, allowing either Egypt or Syria or Asia Minor as possible places of origin (see also Hennecke 1921: 245–246; Quasten 1950: 119).[11]

8.3 Martha in the ACO

The portion of the text which is of interest here reads[12]

> 24. Ἀνδρέας εἶπεν· εὔχρηστόν ἐστιν, ἀδελφοί, ταῖς γυναιξὶ διακονίαν καταστῆσαι.
> 25. Πέτρος εἶπεν· ἐφθάσαμεν τάξαντες· περὶ δὲ τῆς προσφορᾶς τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος ἀκριβῶς μηνύσωμεν.

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[11] Rather surprisingly, Birger Pearson's study on *Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt* (2004) makes no reference to this text.

[12] The numbering follows Schermann's text, which differs from Bickell (1843).

26. Ἰωάννες εἶπεν· ἐπελάθεσθε, ἀδελφοί, ὅτε ᾔτησεν ὁ διδάσκαλος τὸν ἄρτον καὶ τὸ ποτήριον καὶ ηὐλόγησεν αὐτὰ λέγων· τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ σῶμά μου· καὶ το αἶμα, ὅτι οὐκ ἐπέτρεψε ταύταις συστῆναι ἡμῖν,—
2. Μάρθα εἶπεν· διὰ Μαριάμ, ὅτι εἶδεν[13] αὐτὴν μειδιῶσαν· Μαρία εἶπεν· οὐχ ὅτι[14] ἐγέλασα·[15] προέλεγε γὰρ ἡμῖν, ὅτε ἐδίδασκεν, ὅτι τὸ ἀσθενὲς διὰ τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ σωθήσεται.
27. Κηφᾶς εἶπεν· ἐνίων μέμνησθε δέ, ὅτι <προσέταξεν> ταῖς γυναιξὶ μὴ ὀρθαῖς προσεύχεσθαι,[16] ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καθεζομέναις.[17]
28. Ἰάκωβος εἶπεν· πῶς οὖν δυνάμεθα περὶ γυναικῶν διακονίαν ὁρίσαι, εἰ μή τι διακονίαν ἵνα ἐπισχύσωσι ταῖς ἐνδεομέναις;
(Schermann [1914–16] 1968: 31–33)

24. Andrew said: It would be useful, brothers, to establish [a] ministry for the women.
25. Peter said: We have previously legislated. Let us carefully explain regarding the offering of the Body and the Blood.
26. John said: You are forgetting, brothers, that when the teacher requested the bread and the cup and blessed them saying: This is my Body and Blood, he did not permit the women to stand alongside us.
Martha said: It was on account of Mary because he saw her smiling.
Mary said: I did not laugh at this. Previously he said to us, when he was teaching, that the weak would be saved through the strong.
27. Kephas said: Some things should be remembered: that women should not pray upright but seated on the ground.
28. James said: How then can we establish [a] ministry for the women, except the ministry of supporting women in need?
(Stewart-Sykes 2006: 113–114).

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[13] The Syriac has "I saw her laughing," or possibly "she saw…" (Arendzen 1901a: 73).

[14] The Greek text reads οὐκέτι. The emendation derives from Hauler on the basis of the Latin manuscript which reads "non quia risi" (Tidner 1963: 113). This reading is preferred by Hennecke (1921) and Stewart-Sykes (2006: 103). The Greek οὐκέτι would give the sense, "I no longer laughed."

[15] Arendzen suggests there is a line missing here in the Greek, which he restores from the extant Syriac text:

> Mary said, 'I did not really laugh, only I remembered the words of our Lord and exulted, for you know that He told us before, when teaching, "the weak shall be saved by the strong."' (1901a: 79)

[16] This is considerably stronger than the variant given by Bickell, Harnack and Funk: ὅτι ταῖς γυναιξὶ μὴ ὀρθαῖς (πρέπει) προσεύχεσθαι, "that (it is fitting that) women should not pray standing upright." The Syriac connects Cephas' response explicitly with the discussion of the Eucharist: "We ought to remember several things, for it does not beseem women that they should approach the Sacrifice with heads uncovered, but with heads covered" (Arendzen 1901a: 73).

[17] Arendzen notes a significant variant in the Sahidic and Boharic: "Some say it beseems the women to pray standing, and not to prostate themselves on the ground" (1901a: n. 27, pp. 79–80).

This vignette appears almost at the end of the *ACO* and is followed only by a brief notice about gifts (chap. 29) and an encouragement to follow all of the decrees that have been set down (chap. 30). The *ACO* places all of its instructions in the mouths of apostles and, in the first half (the 'Two Ways' section), precisely in the order in which they appear in the list that opens the document. The second section no longer follows this order. However, chapters 15–23 nevertheless follow a similar pattern. In each case an apostle sets out all the relevant instructions for one of the orders. Peter introduces the section (chap. 15) and sets out the requirements for the bishop (ἐπίσκοπος, chap. 16). John sets down the requirements for the presbyters (πρεσβύτεροι, chap. 17–18), James for the reader (ἀναγνώστης, chap. 19), Cephas the widows (χῆραι, chap. 21) and Philip the laity (λαϊκοί, chap. 26). The only unusual feature is the duplication of speeches about deacons (διάκονοι), once in the mouth of Matthew (chap. 23) and once assigned to Andrew (chap. 22).[18] Conversely, in this vignette the character of the text changes and resembles a dialogue. The speeches are much shorter. Martha and Mary appear as speakers alongside the male apostles and it is no longer a single apostle who sets down all the relevant regulations in relation to the one order. This divergence is striking and could indicate the use of a different source (see 8.4 below). The text raises a number of exegetical and interpretive issues.

8.3.1 *The interpretation of ταῖς γυναιξὶ διακονίαν καταστῆσαι*

The opening notice that "it would be useful to establish a ministry for women" (εὔχρηστόν ἐστιν…ταῖς γυναιξὶ διακονίαν καταστῆσαι, 24) implies that women are not to be included among the various forms of διακονία established in the *ACO* up to this point. On the other hand, Peter replies that such a 'ministry for the women' has already been established, but that something needs to be specified about the Eucharist. It has been documented that women served in a number of positions in some of the early Christian communities, including as presbyters, deacons and teachers (Horsley 1981–: 1.121; Eisen 1996). Some scholars have therefore advocated an inclusive reading strategy, whereby, unless otherwise specified, androcentric language is read inclusively (e.g., Schüssler Fiorenza 1983; Eisen 1996; Petersen 1999). The variability in both theology and organisation among the early Christian communities requires, however, that the question be asked specifically for each text. Should the references to the ἐπίσκοπος, πρεσβύτεροι, διάκονοι and λαϊκοί in the *Apostolic Church Order* be interpreted inclusively? A number of observations speak against this.

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[18] Precisely this duplication had been used by Harnack ([1886] 1991b) to posit the use of two sources. See n. 6 above.

First, the sudden introduction of a specific "ministry for the women" (διακονία ταῖς γυναιξί) is strange, if women are to be envisaged already in the various ministry roles discussed to this point. Second, women are not counted among those able to elect a bishop, a task specifically assigned to twelve men (δεκαδύο ἀνδρῶν, 16.1). The elected bishop can therefore be expected likewise to be male; and indeed, is described as "unmarried, or if not, husband of one wife" (ἀγύναιος, εἰ δὲ μή, ἀπὸ μιᾶς γυναικός, 16.2). Third, in view of the significant judiciary function assigned to presbyters and deacons in the *ACO* (Faivre 1981), it is difficult to conceive a community which considers women fit to fulfill such judiciary tasks, yet not able to elect a bishop. More likely the text envisages only men in these roles also, which is also implied by the observation, made in relation to deacons, that "anger destroys a reasonable man" (ὀργὴ γὰρ ἀπόλλυσι ἄνδρα φρόνιμον, 20.2). Finally, Faivre (1984) has argued persuasively that women were not necessarily included in the 'laity.' The placement of this section immediately following the discussion of the λαϊκός (chap. 23) might consequently indicate that women are not included among the laity in this text either.

Consequently, Bickell (1843: 130, n. 169) is likely right in his assumption that what has already been established probably refers to the only explicitly female ministry discussed thus far, the order of widows (so also Gryson 1976: 47), all the more so because the widow is required to be εὐδιάκονος, "a good minister" (21.2). On the other hand, Schöllgen's (1997) warning that silence in a church order need not imply non-existence cautions against presuming that the *ACO* is exhaustive in its description of office-bearers. Be that as it may, the text certainly suggests that at issue is an official function for women at the Eucharist. Bickell translates ταῖς γυναιξὶ διακονίαν καταστῆσαι as "den Weibern ein Diakonenamt zu errichten" (1843: 129), thus evoking another office. Such language of office is used both in the Latin version of the *ACO* ('Diaconissam ordinare'; Tidner 1963: 111) and in the Coptic text ("to appoint women to be made Deaconesses"; Tattam 1848: 28; "to set apart (lit. define) women to be made deacons (diakonos)"; Horner 1904: 305). The language of διακονία καταστῆσαι in *ACO* 24 recalls διάκονοι καθιστάθωσαν (20.1) and χῆραι καθιστανέσθωσαν (21.1), though in this instance reflecting the establishment of a ministry/office, rather than a minister/office bearer.[19]

Peter's response, ἐφθάσαμεν τάξαντες· περὶ δὲ τῆς προσφορᾶς τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος ἀκριβῶς μηνύσωμεν (chap. 25), thus indicates that the only necessary ministry for women has already been established (probably solely the order of widows), but that in regard to their function at the Eucharist something further must be said.

8.3.2 *The interpretation of οὐκ ἐπέτρεψε ταύταις συστῆναι ἡμῖν*

The *ACO* asserts that

> when the teacher requested the bread and the cup and blessed them, saying "this is my body and blood", he did not permit these women to stand alongside (or: with) us (οὐκ ἐπέτρεψε ταύταις συστῆναι ἡμῖν). (26.1)

The key interpretive issue is what is meant by συστῆναι ἡμῖν: are Martha and Mary excluded from standing in a leadership function (either assisting or presiding) at the Eucharist, or are they excluded from standing with the congregation, thus from participating in the Eucharist itself?

Bickell (1843: 131 n. 169) considers the latter possibility, but dismisses it because he knows "no trace" of such an exclusion of women from participation in the Eucharist.[20] Similarly Schaff is certain that

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[19] It could also be argued that the change of formula in chapters 23 and 24 indicates that 'the ministry of the women,' like 'the ordinances (πρόσταγμα) of the laity' that precede it (23.1), are not duties of office, but rather a description of rules for members of the community. "The layman should be content to concern himself with the ordinances of the laity" (Ὁ λαϊκὸς τοῖς προστάγμασι περιπειζέσθω, 23.1) recalls 1 Clement 40.5, "the layman is bound by the laws that pertain to the laity" (ὁ λαϊκὸς ἄνθρωπος τοῖς λαϊκοῖς προστάγμασιν δέδεται). If the 'laity' represents the order of all men not included in the previous orders of bishops, presbyters, readers and deacons, but does not envisage the inclusion of women (as the modern conception of the 'laity' does), then it makes some sense that after directives given to clergy and laity some directives be given to the women of the community who have not so far been addressed. This is unlikely, however, for reasons that will become clear in the discussion of the interpretation of συνίστημι below.

[20] While I concur with Bickell's conclusion that the text does not envisage the exclusion of women from the Eucharist itself, it is not the case that there is no evidence for such exclusion elsewhere. The *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* suggests that women are not present in the worship of the congregation of Demetrius (Patriarch of Alexandria from 189–231 CE). The narrative recounts that Demetrius celebrated the liturgy of Pentecost

> John's words might imply that women were to be kept from all participation in the Lord's Supper, whereas he really meant merely to deny their right to dispense the elements, which right had been claimed for deaconesses. (1889: 247)

So also Harnack ([1886] 1991b: 28 n. 7), Bangerter (1971: 84), and Martimort (1986: 87–88), who takes care to distinguish the question of women 'assisting' at the Eucharist from the question of women 'officiating' at the Eucharist, the latter position advocated by Gryson (1976: 47–48) and Schüssler Fiorenza (1983: 307).

There are a number of texts that exclude women from leadership functions. 1 Timothy 2:12 forbids all women from "teaching or having authority over a man." The *Didascalia Apostolorum* forbids widows from teaching certain topics while permitting others (chap. 15; Vööbus 1979: 2.144–145; see Methuen 1999). The *Didascalia* also discourages widows from baptising (2.151) but provides a role for deaconesses in assisting at the baptism of women and in teaching women neophytes (chap. 16; Vööbus 1979: 2.156–157). The text thus suggests that widows were baptising and that this is a praxis which it seeks to curb (Methuen 1995,

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> and bade the archdeacon give directions to the clergy and the people that not one of them should leave the church, but that they should gather together round the patriarchal throne. (chap. 4; Evetts 1948–: 1.157–158)

At this point the Patriarch builds a fire, prays and then says to the assembled congregation: "I beg you out of your love for me, to allow my wife to be present before you, that she may receive your blessing." With the assent of the congregation one of the servants is sent to call the wife, whereupon it is said that "the holy woman entered, and stood in the midst of the congregation" (ibid.). Clearly the wife of the Patriarch had not been present up to this point; and since this exchange occurs explicitly at the end of the service with the instructions that none be permitted to leave, the narrative implies that she cannot have been present during the liturgy either. Yet if any woman can be expected to participate in the liturgy it is surely the wife of the patriarch himself, particularly on the important feast of Pentecost; indeed, the fact that the patriarch must ask permission for his wife to gain entry implies that women were not permitted to be part of the assembly.

The *History* was translated into Arabic by Severus in the tenth century from Greek and Coptic documents. Heijer (1990) suggests the earliest sources used by the *History* were written in the fifth century. Of course these sources themselves in turn likely include earlier traditions. One feature that might speak for an early dating of the narrative in question is that at one point the narrative envisages books of the Bible still bound separately (for example, the epistles of Paul) or in excerpts, a situation which reflects the second and third century better than the situation of later times (Evetts 1948–: 1.174–177). Given that one possible place of origin for the *ACO* is Egypt, it is intriguing that a narrative set in Alexandria in the third century suggests that women were excluded from participation in the Eucharistic liturgy. There is evidence of women's participation in the Eucharist in Egypt in the fifth century in the *Lausiac History* of Palladius (17.6–9; Rowlandson and Bagnall 1998: 81).

1997, 2005; Cardman 1999; Penn 2001).[21] The *Apostolic Constitutions* are even more telling in their reticence to outlaw baptism by women:

> Περὶ δὲ τοῦ γυναῖκας βαπτίζειν γνωρίζομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι κίνδυνος οὐ μικρὸς ταῖς τοῦτο ἐπιχειρούσαις· διὸ οὐ συμβουλεύομεν· ἐπισφαλὲς γάρ, μᾶλλον δὲ παράνομον καὶ ἀσεβές. (3.9.1; Metzger 1985: 2.142)
>
> Concerning the baptising of women we want you to know that there is no small danger to those [women] who attempt it. Therefore we do not advise it; for it is unsafe, or rather against the law and ungodly.

While clearly contrary to the ideals of the *Constitutions*, the language reveals not only that some women are engaged in baptising others, but also that it is either so widely accepted, or accepted by such powerful people, that the injunction against it can be spoken only lightly: “we do not advise it.”

Neither the *Didascalia* nor the *Apostolic Constitutions* explicitly addresses the question of women’s leadership at the Eucharist, though the latter observes that it was the man, rather than the woman, who was chosen for the priesthood (*CA* 3.9.2) and the subsequent injunction against laypersons (lay men?) usurping sacramental roles, including baptism and the Eucharist (*CA* 3.10.1), might imply it. Furthermore, the deaconess is explicitly prohibited from blessing and from engaging in any tasks of the presbyters and deacons; she is to be a doorkeeper and to assist the presbyters at baptisms of women for the sake of decency (*CA* 8.28.6). The *Canons of Laodicea* (c. 343–381 CE) prohibit women from approaching the altar (canon 44), but also include a curious reference to πρεσβύτιδες or “female presidents” (προκαθήμεναι) who are not to be appointed in the church (canon 11; *NPNF II* 14.129).[22] Canon 44 would seem to exclude all possibility of women assisting or presiding at the Eucharist, while the presence of female presidents could imply it. Similarly Epiphanius states emphatically

> that the ordinance of the church required no more than deaconesses. It mentioned widows too, and called those of them who were still older,

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[21] Such a conflict between the widows and those seeking to limit their ministry, power or inclusion within the leadership is already visible in the Pastorals, in particular 1 Timothy 5:3–16, which uses a similar approach of contrasting stereotypes of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ widow as a means of social control (see Bassler 1984; 1996: 25–26; Price 1997; MacDonald 1999b).

[22] Widows ‘who sit in front’ appear throughout the *Testamentum Domini* and are identified by Cooper and Maclean (1902: 199) with the ‘presbyteresses’ who also appear in the *TD* (1.35; 2.19).

> ‘elder’ (πρεσβύτιδες), but nowhere did it prescribe ‘eldresses’ or ‘priestesses’ (οὐδαμοῦ δὲ πρεσβυτερίδας ἢ ἱερίσσας προσέταξε). Indeed, not even the deacons in the hierarchy of the church have been commissioned to celebrate any mystery, but only to administer the mysteries already celebrated (ἀλλὰ μόνον διακονεῖν τὰ ἐπιτελούμενα). (*Pan.* 79.4.1; Williams 1987–94: 2.623; cf. Holl 1980–: 2.478)

All of these injunctions suggest an interest in curbing the sacerdotal activities of women and consequently imply that women were functioning in such sacerdotal roles in some places and times. This is attested most clearly by the letter of Firmillian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, to Cyprian (256 CE). He recounts an incident that happened some twenty-two years earlier, when

> suddenly,…a certain woman appeared, who, having been in ecstasy, presented herself as a prophet and acted as if thus filled with the Holy Spirit.…. And that woman who earlier, through the tricks and deceits of the devil, was attempting many things for the deception of the faithful, among other things by which she had deceived very many also frequently dared this, that, with an invocation not considered invalid, she pretended to sanctify the bread and to celebrate the Eucharist and she offered the Sacrifice to the Lord, not without the rite of the customary commendation; usurping the accustomed and lawful words of interrogation, she also baptized many that nothing might seem to differ from ecclesiastical rule. (Ep. 75.10; Donna 1964: 302–303)

Given this range of other texts seeking to restrict women’s sacerdotal activities, it appears likely that a similar interest lies behind the *ACO*. It must also be observed, however, that neither συνίστημι nor ἵστημι are typical words for presiding at the Eucharist, for which the more typical word is προΐστημι (Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12; Chrysostom *Hom on Mtt* 32.6, PG 57.384). Ἵστημι is more typically used to describe the activity of the congregation (e.g., *CA* 2.57.8, 12; Liturgy of St. James; Mercier 1974: 160, 184, 196, 202, 204). In a number of writings συνίστημι functions as a technical term for a station in penance (Lampe 1961–68: 1333; Poschmann 1954). The most developed form of such penitential stations occurs in Basil of Caesarea, where the συστάντες form the fourth group (alongside the προσκλαίοντες, ἀκρώμενοι and ὑποπίπτοντες), who are permitted to stand with the faithful, but not yet permitted to partake of the Eucharist (*Ep.* 188.4; 199.22, 217.56–59 see also 199.34). If συνίστημι is used in this sense here, then it is women’s right to remain with the congregation at the Eucharist that is at stake, and the text envisages that they may be required to leave before the Eucharist, as the catechumens were.

Although there is some evidence for precisely such a complete exclusion of women from the Eucharist in Egypt in the second or third century (see n. 20), it seems unlikely that such a meaning is intended. First, it would require one to read ταῖς γυναιξὶ διακονίαν καταστῆσαι as the establishment of a ministry *to* rather than *by* the women. Yet διακονία appears elsewhere in the *ACO* as ministry carried out by office-bearers including deacons and widows (20.2; 21.2; 22.2). Second, the Syriac version is quite clear that women participate in the Eucharist. It renders the injunction of Cephas that "the women should not pray standing upright" (ταῖς γυναιξὶ μὴ ὀρθαῖς προσεύχεσθαι) as "it does not beseem women that they should approach the Sacrifice with heads uncovered, but with heads covered" (chap. 27; Arendzen 1901a: 73). Maclean (1910: 27–28, 42) suggests that προσεύχεσθαι is an ancient corruption of προσέρχεσθαι which has been correctly preserved in the Syriac, and cites in support the requirement that women be veiled while communing set down in the *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.57.21, Ethiopic *Didascalia* 10 and *Testamentum Domini* 2.4. The Saidic version renders chapter 27 "Ye have seen that he gave not a place to the women to assist with them" (Horner 1904: 305), which likewise implies that the issue is one of leadership rather than presence at the Eucharist.[23]

It is worth observing the distinction between 'assisting' and 'presiding' at the Eucharist (Martimort 1986: 87–88). Both the use of συνίστημι rather than προΐστημι and the fact that women are not envisaged as presbyters or bishops in the *ACO* suggest that the question under discussion is the possibility of women assisting at, rather than presiding over, the Eucharist. Two caveats are in order, however. First, there is a danger of importing distinctions in terminology that may be overdrawn: it is possible that the *ACO* makes no distinction between προΐστημι and συνίστημι, and/or between presiding and assisting at the Eucharist. While it appears more likely that the latter is in view, the former cannot be excluded. Second, recognising that church orders promote an envisaged ideal rather than simply reflecting reality, even if the editor is merely considering (and countering) the possibility that women could even assist (much less preside) at the Eucharist, this does not prove that women in the community were not presiding at the Eucharist. Nor need it preclude the possibility that the opponents whom the text seeks to convince envisaged and promoted roles for women well beyond the roles delimited by the text.

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[23] Conversely, the Ethiopic and Arabic version reveal a focus which has moved away from the issue of women's presence and/or participation onto questions relating to the elements of the Eucharist itself. The Ethiopic version reads, "he did not command that they should treat these as common things" (Horner 1904: 137) and the Arabic renders the passage "he did not command that they [the Body and Blood] should be regarded as material" (Horner 1904: 243). The Greek text as it stands is supported by the Latin translation (both the earliest translation, as well as the earliest manuscript of the text): "non inperavit istis, ut nobiscum adstarent," "he did not command them that they should stand with us" (Tidner 1963: 111). The Ethiopic and Arabic versions could indicate that the issue of women's leadership at the Eucharist is not relevant in these contexts and that the text has been amended for this reason.

8.3.3 *Four reasons for excluding women*

The text proceeds to offer four reasons why such a ministry for women is deemed inappropriate. First, John cites the praxis of Jesus, observing that Jesus excluded the women at the Last Supper:

> You are forgetting (ἐπελάθεσθε), brothers, that when the teacher asked for the bread and the cup and blessed them saying, 'this is my body and blood,' he did not permit these [women] to stand with us. (26.1)[24]

While no such narrative is known from any canonical or apocryphal Gospel, the text assumes that the audience knows such a narrative: ἐπιλανθάνομαι implies something that is known has been forgotten or overlooked. I will return to the question of this tradition presupposed by the text below. Suffice it to note here that, as a first response to the question of the establishment of a ministry for the women at the Eucharist, John cites the praxis of Jesus: he did not permit Martha and Mary to stand with the male apostles at the Last Supper.

To this first reason is joined a second which serves to explain the praxis of Jesus: "it was because he saw Mary laughing" (26.2).[25] This explanation is offered by Martha, who appears on the scene unannounced to join the discussion. The 'laughing Mary' appears in a number of other texts including *Sibylline Oracles* 8.622, Ethiopic *Epistula Apostolorum* 14 and the *Infancy Gospel of James* 17.8. Schmidt ([1919] 1967: 52) suggests that the laughter of Mary at the annunciation (*Ep. Ap.* 14) is not the laughter of lack of faith, but of joy. Conversely, laughing can be a sign of derision (Methuen 1999) that reveals the ignorance of those being laughed at and the superiority of the one laughing (Hartenstein 2000: 54). Such laughter appears particularly, but not exclusively, in gnostic texts (*Acts of John* 101–102; *Acts of Thomas* 98; *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* 55.30–56.19; *Apocalypse of Peter* 81.3–21; Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.24.4; but see also *Acts of Peter* 30; *Acts of Andrew* 55). Christ appears laughing at his detractors at the crucifixion, often in a specifically docetic context (see Grant 1959; Stroumsa 2004). Mary's laughter is probably to be read in this context, as indicating derision, and perhaps also as a claim to superior knowledge/insight to others.[26] Since this laughter is judged unfavourably (it is the reason for Mary's exclusion from the Supper), if her laughter is a claim to superior knowledge, this claim is thereby denied. Given the claim to insight attributed to a Mary in a number of gnostic texts (cf. Bovon 1984; Marjanen 1996; Petersen 1999; Streete 1999; de Boer 2004), it is possible that there is an anti-gnostic polemic at work in this.

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[24] The construction τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ σῶμά μου· καὶ το αἷμα appears to be a paraphrase of Matthew 26:26, 28 (or its parallel Mark 14:22–23): the Johannine Gospel uses the contrast σαρξ/αἷμα (Jn 6:51–59), while Luke uses the construction τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου ("the cup of the new covenant in my blood," 22:20; so also 1 Cor 11:25). A similar formula is cited by Justin (*Apol.* 1.66.3). While the earlier designation of the Eucharist as "the offering of the body and blood" (*ACO* 25) has been dubbed as post-Nicene, Stewart-Sykes (2006: 48–49) adduces a number of similar ante-Nicene expressions. Perhaps the expression is simply an extension of Hebrews 10:10 which speaks of "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ" (ἡ προσφορὰ τοῦ σώματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).

[25] In the Syriac, Ethiopic and Arabic versions it is Martha who observes the laughter and draws attention to it.

The exclusion of women has thus been justified on the basis of the praxis of Jesus ('he did not permit these women to stand with us') and of the behaviour of Mary ('she laughed'). A third reason is supplied by

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[26] While this laughter is set in the context of the Last Supper in the Greek and Latin version, the Ethiopic and Arabic versions amend 26.1 to eliminate the question whether the women are permitted to stand with the apostles, inserting instead a statement about the meaning of the bread and wine. The Ethiopic reads

> And said Yuhanes: Have ye forgotten O brethren, that on the day when our Lord offered up the bread and the wine he said: this is my Body and this is my Blood. For he did not command that they should treat those as common things. And said Marta concerning Maryam: See her laughing. And said Maryam: it was not because of that that I laughed, for our Lord said to us: It is good that the sick should be healed by the whole. (Horner 1904: 137)

Similarly the Arabic:

> Said John: 'Ye have forgotten, O brethren, that at the time in which the Teacher asked for bread and wine and blessed them and said: This is my Body and this is my Blood, he did not command that they should be regarded as material. Said Martha concerning Mary: Look at her, and she laughs. Said Mary: Not because of (this) that I laughed. The Teacher said: 'It is good (that) the sick should be healed by the strong.' (Horner 1904: 243–244).

Consequently, in these versions Mary's laughter is a response to John's statement that the bread and wine were not to be treated "as common things" (Ethiopic) or "as material" (Arabic).

Mary, who adduces an otherwise unknown saying which she attributes to Jesus, that "weakness will be saved through strength" (τὸ ἀσθενὲς διὰ τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ σωθήσεται, 26.2).[27] While the saying initially appears as a statement in her defense, in the context of the passage it serves to further justify the exclusion of the women. In a number of texts τὸ ἀσθενής indicates the female (so in particular 1 Peter 3:7; 1 Clement 6.2; Eusebius *HE* 5.1.18) and in the context of this dialogue precisely such a gendered reading seems likely (so, for example, Gryson 1976: 47). One can of course apply the contrast of 'the weak and the strong' to a number of other binary oppositions, for example flesh and spirit (Harnack [1886] 1991b: 30 n. 13) or human weakness/sinfulness and divine power (Gryson 1976: 139 n. 16). Yet even if such interpretations might have been the intent of the dominical saying in another context, they are unlikely in this instance. Here the saying is reminiscent of gnostic texts in which salvation is attained by becoming male (*Gos. Thom.* 114; Clement *Ex. Theod.* 1.21.3; Hippolytus, *Ref. Haer.* 5.8.44; *1 Apoc.*

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[27] Harnack ([1886] 1991b: 29 n. 9), and following him Stewart-Sykes (2006: 45) claim that the dominical saying is cited by John, and that the comments of Martha and Mary are reported speech. This also appears to be assumed by Schermann ([1914–16] 1968: 32) whose chapter divisions always commence with a change of speaker, but who includes the speech of Martha and Mary within the previous chapter (hence within the speech of John). Conversely Bickell (1843: 129–130) assigns the speeches of Martha and Mary to their own chapters. If one considers the speech of Martha and Mary reported speech, then one might assume that the dominical saying concerning the salvation of the weak by the strong is spoken by John rather than Mary. However the suggestion that Martha and Mary are not 'really' participants in the dialogue must be rejected (see further below). Consequently the simpler and preferred reading is to consider the entire text of 26.2, including the dominical saying, part of the speech of Mary. Since there has been no suggestion at any other point in the *ACO* of a change of speaker other than where this change is clearly marked, there is no sound reason for assuming a change of speaker between οὐχ ὅτι ἐγέλασα and προέλεγε γὰρ ἡμῖν.

The origin of the apocryphal saying need not detain us further here. Bickell merely notes that he cannot find such a saying anywhere in the canonical texts: "einen solchen Ausspruch finde ich in der h. Schrift nirgends" (Bickell 1843: 130 n. 164; see also Harnack [1886] 1991a: 236 note). Schermann is content to designate it "ein apokryphes Herrenwort" ([1914–16] 1968: 32 note). Harnack ([1886] 1991b: 30 n. 13) proposes that the saying may derive from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, and that the sisters may have held a significant place in Egyptian Christianity. This suggestion has been argued also by Baumstark (1913). Both the interest in transcending (female) gender and the role assigned to Salome in the extant fragments of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* are consistent with a conjecture that two other women (Mary and Martha) might have had significant roles in this Gospel and that the saying "the weak shall be saved through the strong" derived from the Gospel, with a specific gender application. Given the small number of extant fragments of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, however, any speculation on its contents remains hypothetical.

Jas. 41.15–19). While no such subversion of gender roles is envisaged, the implication is certainly that the weak women will attain salvation through the mediation of the strong men—be it the male Christ or the men who are to be the dispensers of this salvation in the Eucharist. The attribution of such a saying to Jesus himself grants the dictum the highest possible authority.

There follows a third comment, by Cephas: "Some things should be remembered: that women should not pray upright but seated on the ground" (chap. 27). How this is to be connected to the foregoing discussion is a little unclear. Some suggest that the reminder that women pray seated offers a further argument against their officiating at the Eucharist, which would require them to pray standing upright (so Bickell 1843: 130 n. 169). Martimort observes that "it was the deacon, especially, who stood during the celebration—even while the other celebrants were seated" (1986: 87) and adduces this as further evidence that the issue at stake is assisting, rather than presiding, at the Eucharist.

An alternative proposal is advanced by Maclean (1910) and Arendzen (1901a). As has already been noted, Maclean (1910: 27–28, 42) suggested that προσεύχεσθαι is an ancient corruption of προσέρχεσθαι, which has been correctly preserved in the Syriac text which reads "it does not beseem women that they should approach the Sacrifice with heads uncovered, but with heads covered" (Arendzen 1901a: 73). In this case, rather than adding a further reason for the exclusion of women from a diaconal function at the Eucharist, the text adds a novel requirement. While the dominical saying settles the matter that women cannot share the function of the deacons in assisting at the Eucharist, they should even be veiled when approaching the altar to receive it (so Arendzen 1901a: 79). It is also notable that the Sahidic reverses the statement: "Some say that it is right for women to pray standing up, and not to throw themselves upon the earth" (Horner 1904: 305). This might indicate a different liturgical praxis in the Coptic churches.

Stewart-Sykes offers yet a third possible interpretation on the basis of the *Questions of Bartholomew*. In this text Mary (Theotokos) stands to pray but sits to reveal mysteries (2.13–14). This difference in posture suggests the correct posture for prophecy is seated (cf. Hermas *Visions* 1.3.4). Consequently, Stewart-Sykes (2006: 113 n. 46) wonders whether the agraphon of Cephas might originally have referred not to the prayer of women, but rather to their prophesying. If this is so, the saying has nevertheless been adapted into a novel context in which its original application to the prophesying of women has disappeared.

The discussion is closed by James who concludes, "How then (πῶς οὗν) can we establish a women's ministry, except for this, that they strengthen the needy women?" (chap. 28). Ἵνα ἐπισχύσωσι ταῖς ἐνδεομέναις can also be rendered "that they strengthen those in chains," an alternative favoured by Faivre (1992: 60–64), who finds here echoes of Wisdom 2:10–12 and Isaiah 3:10. This ministry, he suggests, does not exclude care for the sick, but could also be enlarged to include evangelism, healing or exorcism. He observes a preoccupation with disciplinary functions ('binding and loosing') assigned to other offices in the *ACO*, which would be matched by such a reading of the role of the women in the task of loosing those in binds. While it is possible that women carried out such roles in the community, this reading seems out of keeping with the agenda detected in the text thus far, which has tended towards limiting the roles and authority of women, not only here in relation to the Eucharist, but also by assigning to the deacons the same tasks which have been assigned to the widows (so Stewart-Sykes 2006: 40, 49). Consequently, it seems more likely that the διακονία of women is here limited to acts of charity. This would be consistent with the ministry envisaged for the widows, two of whom are charged to the task of prayer "and for revelations concerning whatever is necessary" (21.1; Stewart-Sykes 2006: 112)[28] while one is charged to minister to the sick and engage in acts of charity (21.2).

The issue of a ministry (διακονία) for women has been discussed at length and a number of reasons have been offered why such a ministry at the Eucharist is not appropriate: the praxis of Jesus, the laughter of Mary, a dominical saying, and the posture of women at prayer. All of these preclude, in the opinion of the redactor of the text, the ability of women to assist at the Eucharist and mean that the only ministry available to women is that of "supporting the women in need" (chap. 28). Thus the question is settled for the redactor of the *ACO*. For this study, however, the question has only just been raised: why does the text argue the case like this? Why the need to argue the case at all? More specifically, what role does Martha play in this argument? Before turning to these questions it is worth re-visiting the question of sources for the text, since greater clarity on the nature of any source used by the text could reveal why the source has been incorporated here and how it is used to argue the case.

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[28] The curious addition of πρὸς τὰς ἀποκαλύψεις περὶ οὕ ἂν δέη invites further investigation. Does this indicate a prophetic function for the widows? This could strengthen the proposal of Stewart-Sykes that the question of the posture of women at prayer is connected to the posture of women in prophecy. Conversely, Bickell (1843: 126 n. 147) suggests that the text refers either to the undressing of women's bodies (compare Epiphanius *Pan.* 79.3.6) or to the transmission (revealing) of messages from needy women. This cannot be explored further here.

8.4 SOURCES FOR THE NARRATIVE

It has been argued that this vignette derives from an extra-canonical Gospel source. There are two features of the *ACO* which suggest the incorporation of such a source. First, the *ACO* includes a list of apostles which differs strikingly from the canonical lists (Mtt 10:2–4; Mk 3:16–19; Lk 6:13–16) but shows close similarity to the list in the *Epistula Apostolorum* (Baumstark 1913: 234–236; Haase 1915: 106; Schmidt [1919] 1967: 242–243).[29] In both cases John, rather than Simon Peter takes first place and Cephas is listed as an independent apostle.[30] Both include Nathanael, who is known only from the Gospel of John but does not appear in the synoptic lists of apostles and neither list includes James, son of Alphaeus, or Thaddaeus. While the names are almost identical in the two lists, their order differs, rendering it unlikely that the two texts are immediately dependent on each other. Baumstark (1913: 236) therefore suggested that both the *Epistula Apostolorum* and the *ACO* drew on another, older source in which the names appeared not in a set list of apostles, as in the synoptic Gospels, but rather in a form akin to the Gospel of John, which cites names occasionally. This older source, he argued, must be a non-canonical Gospel—he proposed the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.[31] The *Epistula Apostolorum* and the *ACO* share not only a related list of apostles, but also the appearance of Martha—as resurrection witness in the *Epistula* and at the Last Supper in the *ACO*. Consequently it has been proposed that in these cases, too, the *Epistula* and *ACO* drew on the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (Harnack [1886] 1991a: 214 n. 37; [1886] 1991b: 30 n. 13; Baumstark 1913).

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[29] With minor variations in the order, the canonical list includes Simon (Peter), James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus [Judas, son of James, in Luke], Simon the Cananaean [the Zealot in Luke] and Judas Iscariot. The *Epistula Apostolorum* gives the list as John, Thomas, Peter, Andrew, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Nathanael, Judas Zelotes and Cephas (*NTA* 1.252). The list in *ACO* 1 reads John, Matthew, Peter, Andrew, Philip, Simon, James, Nathanel, Thomas, Cephas, Bartholomew, Judas [brother] of James (Schermann [1914–16] 1968: 12).

[30] According to Epiphanius, John also appears first in the list of apostles in the *Gospel of the Ebionites* (*Pan.* 30.13.3).

[31] All that is known about this Gospel derives from a handful of references and a few fragments cited by Clement of Alexandria; hence little can be deduced about the Gospel's contents, beyond the hypothesis that it probably derives from the second century and was used by some Egyptian Christians, though its use was probably limited to encratic circles (Wilson 1978: 330; Schneemelcher 1991b: 214–215). The extant

In a similar vein, Goetz (1921) proposed that in its account of the Last Supper the *ACO* draws on a source that was also used by the Gospel of Mark. Earlier, Haupt (1913: 133) had suggested that Mark's source located the Last Supper in Bethany, following directly on from the anointing. Goetz finds support for Haupt's thesis in the *ACO* and the surprising presence of Mary and Martha at the Last Supper there. Unlike Baumstark, however, Goetz (1921: 170) did not identify this source used by the *ACO* and Mark with the *Gospel of the Egyptians* but rather suggested that, if the latter did include this fragment about the Last Supper, it probably likewise drew it from the unknown source. If this theory is correct, the narrative source for this portion of the *ACO* would be very ancient indeed, possibly predating the Gospel of Mark.

Since a number of other apocryphal texts have been found since these scholars wrote (for example the findings at Nag Hammadi in 1945), the scope for possible sources for any apocryphal narratives and dominical sayings has increased considerably. Stewart-Sykes (2006: 47) consequently proposes that the dialogue with Martha and Mary has been lifted from a revelation dialogue, a form that was popular among second-century gnostic groups. There is an obvious similarity in form in the use of dialogue. Mary appears in a number of gnostic writings (*Pistis Sophia, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Philip, Gospel of Mary* and *Dialogue of the Saviour*) as well as appearing paired with Martha in *Epistula Apostolorum*, the *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle*, the Hippolytan *Commentary on the Song of*

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fragments reveal a significant role for Salome. Moreover Clement cites two sayings of Jesus from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, both addressed to Salome: "For, they say: the Saviour himself said, 'I am come to undo the works of the female'" (*Strom*. 3.63.1–2; *NTA* 1.209) and

> When Salome asked when what she had inquired about would be known, the Lord said, 'When you have trampled on the garment of shame and when the two become one and the male with the female (is) neither male nor female.' (*Strom* 3.92.2; *NTA* 1.211)

Harnack notes this transcending of maleness and femaleness as a significant difference to the *ACO*.

Songs and the *First Apocalypse of James*. In all of these texts Stewart-Sykes observes gnostic or anti-gnostic tendencies and a concern with the negation of the female (or its refutation).

> Not only, therefore, does the presence of Mary indicate that the source employed [here] derives from the second-century debate with gnosticism but the pairing with Martha likewise indicates a second-century and Asian provenance which engages with the gnostics. (Stewart-Sykes 2006: 47)

Stewart-Sykes' argument that the text incorporates a source is centrally premised on the claim that Martha and Mary are not present in the text in a fictive sense, because they are not included in the list of apostles explicitly named as gathered in chapter one. This discrepancy had already been noted by Harnack, who proposed that the comment of Martha and the response of Mary (26.2) are an aside made by the apostle John ("eine vom Apostel gemachte Zwischenbemerkung," [1886] 1991b: 29 n. 9). Stewart-Sykes concurs:

> This exchange is thus taken from a source, and it is entirely possible that in the source John, Martha and Mary were all present and that the passage as presently found in K [i.e. the *ACO*] stood as dialogue, and has been lifted with no editing, but that the two women are not present in the envisaged dialogue of [the *ACO*]. (2006: 46)

The proposal that the *ACO* has simply "lifted the dialogue with no editing" is untenable, however, as is the foundation on which it is premised, the assumption that Martha and Mary are not present in the fictive gathering of the apostles envisaged by the text of the *ACO* because they are not listed in the apostle list at the opening. First, there is nothing in the opening chapter of the *ACO* that requires one to assume that the list of apostles be taken as a complete record of all persons present at the fictive gathering. Nor is it impossible for a redactor to contradict his own fiction, either intentionally or unintentionally, or to introduce novel characters at will in order to suit his purposes.

Second, Stewart-Sykes (2006: 72) had argued that the source of the Two Ways section in the *ACO* had already assigned the different sections of the two ways to different apostles; consequently the formula ᾿Ιωάννες εἶπεν·...Πέτρος εἶπεν· does not derive from the redactor, though the redactor has shaped the second part of the *ACO* to match the pattern of apostolic speeches established in the first. The dialogue with Martha is introduced with the identical formula to all other apostolic speeches in the text (Μάρθα εἶπεν...Μαρία εἶπεν, 26.2). If this dialogue has simply been "lifted with no editing" one is required to believe that the source for the Two Ways section in the first half of the *ACO* and the hypothetical dialogue source containing the dialogue with Martha and Mary both use the identical formula for introducing speech and the identical form of simply setting one person's speech alongside another's without any intervening text. This seems highly incredible. Far more plausible is the suggestion that the redactor has adapted the source to assimilate it to the established pattern. In that case, however, the argument that the women are not part of the fictive setting of the dialogue of the *ACO* is undercut entirely. For precisely the redactional decision to introduce their speech with the identical formula to the apostolic speeches makes them appear as real interlocutors in the text, and only the most pedantic text-centered scholar will observe any contradiction with the list of apostles in the opening chapter.

One can quibble about the sources, but the rhetorical effect remains the same: Martha and Mary appear as participants in the apostolic dialogue. Nothing in the text indicates that Μάρθα εἶπεν and Μαρία εἶπεν are to be read any differently to Ἰωάννες εἶπεν and Πέτρος εἶπεν. Thus the argument (of both Harnack and Stewart-Sykes) that Mary and Martha are not actually present in the fictive scene, and that their statements are not part of the dialogue cannot be maintained. They might not be explicitly present in the fictive opening of the *ACO*, but they are certainly present in the fictive dialogue at its conclusion (so also Jensen 1992: 142).

If, then, the fictive presence of Martha and Mary is real and intentional, one need no longer explain their supposed 'fictive absence' and curious participation in the dialogue with any theories of hypothetical sources that have not been edited. Rather, it appears that the redactor edited any putative source that lies behind the text of *ACO* 24–28 just as freely as any other sources used. In this case, it needs to be asked whether the sudden appearance of Martha and Mary, and the reference to an event at the Last Supper which is presumed to be known by the audience, are indicators of the use of a source which has been incorporated, or rather an intertextual reference (see Plett 1991; Matthews 1996; Stoops and MacDonald 1997). In the latter case much less can be deduced about the shape of the original narrative, for such an intertextual reference might simply evoke a known narrative without recounting it, or might deconstruct and reconstruct it significantly.

What can be drawn, however, are two important consequences: first, that a tradition placing Martha and Mary at the Last Supper was known to the audience;[32] and second, that this tradition could be used in debates over the place of women at the Eucharist. Whether this tradition derived from an apocryphal Gospel or a gnostic dialogue, whether it was a written or an oral tradition might never be known. Be that as it may, the significance of the text lies in the way in which it attests a central argument proposed here: that Martha proved supremely useful for thinking and arguing with—in this case, for arguing about the leadership of women at the Eucharist. Moreover, the way in which Martha is used to argue in this text is itself interesting and revealing.

8.5 Purpose and function of the text

There are some striking features of this passage that invite much closer inspection. First, it is remarkable that no less than four distinct reasons have been offered for the exclusion of women from a διακονία at the Eucharist. Nowhere else does the *ACO* offer so many reasons for its decisions. Typically, only one reason is given for an injunction. For example, the establishment of three deacons is justified on the basis of a written text (20.1) and the instruction that no one should obstruct the path of another is justified on the basis of the actions of the angels (23.3). Even where a decision is altered, as is the case when John's instruction that two presbyters should be installed is corrected to three, it is done on the basis of a single reason ("For there are twenty-four presbyters, twelve on the right and twelve on the left," 17.2). In most cases, however, no reason is offered at all: the fact that an apostle offers the injunction is reason enough in itself (e.g., chap. 16, 19, 21, 22). The word of the apostle is sufficient, as Peter observes in *ACO* 30, simply because they have the command from the Lord.

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[32] It is possible, of course, that the comment of John, "you are forgetting…," serves merely as a cunning rhetorical strategy to introduce a completely novel idea in a way that makes it appear known. If so, this would merely render the inclusion of such a narrative placing Martha and Mary at the Last Supper more interesting. It would raise the question why the redactor would create such a narrative—indeed, precisely *this* narrative involving these two women—and what this reveals about the rhetorical value of such a narrative for the redactor's purposes.

Conversely, in the section concerning the ministry for the women, the word of the apostles is evidently not sufficient; nor is it sufficient to cite a single reason. On the basis of the rest of the church order, one might have expected Andrew's request for the establishment of a ministry for the women to be met with a single speech by Peter, outlining what such a ministry would be, or why it is not to be established. Or, perhaps, one might expect that John's response, reminding the others that Jesus did not permit the women to stand with the apostles, would be sufficient. The fact that it is not is highly significant. For, as was noted in chapter one,

> the amount of energy which a culture expends in order to suppress or marginalize an ideological voice forms a reliable index to the effectiveness of that voice as posing a threat to the hegemonic practices of that culture. (Boyarin 1991: 31)

The *ACO* expends a surprising amount of energy in making its point about the ministry for the women; far more energy than it has spent on any other injunction. That the text should work so hard to convince on this point, and should raise such an extraordinary number of reasons to shore up its position, indicates both the presence and the strength of the counterarguments.

Second, whereas in all other cases the instructions concerning a particular office are offered by a single apostle, in this instance a number of apostles, as well as Martha and Mary, offer opinions on the topic. Faivre (1992) makes a number of insightful observations concerning the identity of these apostles involved in the discussion. For one thing, the *ACO* contrasts John and Peter and appears to be interested in modulating the authority of John at a number of points. While John appears first in the list of disciples, it is Peter who introduces the church order, who is given the right to speak first (chap. 15), and who also has the last word (chap. 30). In the first part of the *ACO* the apostles speak in the same order in which they are listed in the opening. In the second part, conversely, John speaks only after Peter and, moreover, is corrected by the rest on the question of how many presbyters should be installed (17.2). Tellingly it was John himself who introduced the possibility that "if someone should seem to say something which is improper, he should be contradicted" (chap. 3). In the matter of the ministry of women John once again speaks after Peter and, once again, is not given the final word on the subject.

One agenda of the text as it stands, therefore, appears to be the moderation of Johannine traditions and/or their authority. Such an agenda is not surprising given another apparent agenda of the text, which clearly seeks to limit the ministry role of women. Modern scholars have observed that the Gospel of John is perhaps the most women-friendly of the canonical Gospels, giving women voice at key moments: the woman at the well serves as the first missionary (4:39–42); Martha, rather than Peter, proclaims the great confession of faith (11:27); and Mary Magdalene announces the resurrection (20:18). That the *ACO* is familiar with Johannine tradition is implied not only by the primacy accorded to John, but also by the appearance within the *ACO* of other figures known from the Fourth Gospel: Cephas, Nathanael, Martha and Mary. It appears, then, that in the matter of the ministry of women, the *ACO* is concerned to moderate Johannine traditions and does so, in part, by reversing the status of Peter and John.

Also intriguing is the appearance of Cephas in this context. Cephas appears in the canonical Gospels only in John 1:42, where he is explicitly identified with Peter. There are other traditions which separate the two figures. In particular the Pauline literature knows a Cephas who is not identified with Peter (Gal 2:8–9; so also implied in 1 Cor 9:5; 15:5), as does Clement of Alexandria (so Eusebius, *HE* 1.12.2) and the *Epistula Apostolorum*.[33] Paul identifies Cephas as one of the pillars of Jerusalem, alongside James and John. Moreover, 1 Corinthians identifies groups (and traditions?) associated with Cephas (1:12; cf. Gal 2:11–14). Since it also speaks of Cephas traveling with "a sister as wife" (1 Cor 9:5) and since the letter deals with questions concerning the appropriate attire of women in worship precisely in passages which are considered quite 'unpauline' ("fort peu pauliniens"; Faivre 1992: 58), Faivre proposes that these passages (1 Cor 11:13–16; 14:33–37) might well be taken from the partisans of Cephas. If this is so, it could explain the curious coincidence that both of the times that Cephas speaks in the *ACO* it is on the subject of women (chap. 21; 27) and, more importantly, the attribution to Cephas of a saying concerning the appropriate posture of women at prayer (or the appropriate attire, if one considers the Syriac version to preserve the original), which bears resemblance to 1 Cor 11:13 and the submission enjoined in 1 Cor 14:34–35. Faivre concludes,

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[33] While many scholars would contend the identity of Cephas with Peter in these passages and elsewhere, the possibility of a distinction between Cephas and Peter has been discussed by Lake (1921), Goguel (1933: 272–275), Riddle (1940), and more recently by Ehrman (1990). Ehrman's argument is critiqued by Allison (1992).

> le fait qu'aucune des versions de la CEA n'utilise le vocabulaire et les termes de 1 Co et que cependant elles s'accordent toutes pour attributer à Céphas la paternité d'instructions dont le contenu est similaire à celui des deux passages peut-être non pauliniens de l'épître, laisse à penser qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une tradition pseudo-apostolique déduite de l'écrit néo-testamentaire, mais que nous pourrions être en présence d'une véritable tradition dont l'origine pourrait être antérieure a l'insertion des verset concernés dans la *première épître aux Corinthiens.* (1992: 59)[34]

The suggestion that the name Cephas here serves as a marker of traditions associated with this figure, traditions which could be as ancient as the New Testament, is bold. Nevertheless it is not impossible. There is no inherent reason why oral traditions cannot be carried as effectively as written ones. Consequently there is no reason why any such traditions associated with Cephas could not have persisted over time just as effectively as other traditions carried within the canonical texts. Furthermore, the number of other curiosities, such as the appearance of Martha and Mary at the Supper, the unknown dominical saying, and the unusual list of apostles, suggest either that the author of the *ACO* is particularly prone to inventing strange new fictions or, far more plausibly, that the *ACO* operates in a sphere of traditions that are unknown from elsewhere. This does not deny the authenticity of these traditions; it rather makes the text more significant as a rare testimony to the diversity of traditions known in the early Church before canonisation and the fight with 'heresy' condemned many of these to oblivion.[35]

Similarly Faivre proposes that the name Andrew might be inserted either for symbolic reasons (contrasting the ministry of women with that of men in a word-play on ἀνήρ) or that the name likewise is associated with a literary tradition. Notably Andrew, Peter, Mary and Levi participate in the discussion concerning the possibility of special revelations to women in the *Gospel of Mary* (see *NTA* 1.394), though Faivre (1992: 50) considers it unlikely that the *ACO* knows or uses this Gospel. It is probably not possible to determine whether an individual tradition or symbolic meaning can be thus assigned to each speaker in the text, or whether certain speakers appear because they are already associated with each other (as, for example, Cephas, James and John are closely associated in Gal 2:9). It is unlikely, however, that the names are irrelevant or random.

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[34] "The fact that none of the versions of the *ACO* use the vocabulary and terminology of 1 Corinthians and yet all agree in attributing to Cephas the origin of instructions whose content is similar to that of the two passages of the epistle which perhaps are not Pauline suggests that it is not a matter of a pseudapostolic tradition deduced from the writings of the New Testament, but that we could be faced with a true tradition whose origins could lie anterior to the insertion of the relevant verses in the first letter to the Corinthians."

[35] Authenticity is here to be distinguished from historicity: to suggest the text preserves an authentic tradition implies that the traditions associated with Cephas are as ancient as, for example, the Pauline and Johannine traditions. To what extent any of these traditions preserve historically accurate information is another question entirely. It would be incorrect, however, to presume *a priori* that the material preserved in the *ACO* must be late, fictitious and secondary purely because it is not attested elsewhere.

The choice of pseudo-apostolic speech is itself highly revealing as a rhetorical strategy. The *ACO* is unusually unapologetic about its pseudepigraphy. Faivre (1992: 25–26) suggests that this might be a sign of antiquity and of drawing on traditions which it recognises as authentically apostolic and therefore does not feel a need to defend.[36] Apostolic pseudepigraphy entails a claim to antiquity and authenticity (Wolter 1997: 664). At the same time it was noted earlier that such pseudepigraphy was by no means universally accepted in the church. Not only Tertullian (*de bapt.* 17.4), but also the *Apostolic Constitutions* attest that both the writing and public reading of such pseudepigraphical works could have dire consequences:

> If any one publicly reads in the Church the spurious books (τὰ ψευδεπίγραφα βιβλία) of the ungodly, as if they were holy, to the destruction of the people and of the clergy, let that person be deposed. (*CA* 8.47.60; Metzger 1985: 3.298)

The rejection of a pseudepigraphal work was based not only on its pseudepigraphy, but also on the perceived heterodoxy of its teaching (thus Tertullian, *de bapt.* 17.5; *CA* 6.16.1; Eusebius *HE* 6.12.2–6). The two go hand in hand—the claim to be preserving authentic apostolic tradition is expressed in its attachment to apostolic figures and, conversely, the charge that the teaching is heterodox evokes the added indignation of deceit. Earlier it was observed that one reason for such a choice might be the desire to make global claims for the directions contained in the church order at a time when there were not yet the global structures of authority that could enable the exercise of such control (as afforded later by the ecumenical councils and the power of a Christian emperor). Schöllgen (1996: 117) proposes a second reason might lie in the clash over the interpretation of Scripture: where the debate consists precisely in the interpretation of texts or traditions held to be sacred by both sides, an appeal to a sacred text cannot settle the matter. It has already been suggested that the *ACO* seeks to moderate Johannine tradition: perhaps the choice of pseudepigraphy is another indicator that it is precisely the use and interpretation of traditions that is at stake. The *ACO* assumes commonly held traditions including a tradition that places Martha and Mary at the Last Supper and perhaps also traditions associated specifically with Cephas. The use of pseudepigraphy might imply that the citing of these traditions themselves could not settle the question and that the authority of the apostles is invoked as a means of guaranteeing a certain interpretation of the tradition.

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[36] By comparison, the *Didascalia* and *Apostolic Constitutions* provide a much more detailed fictive narrative setting explaining where and why the apostles gathered and how the work was transmitted (*Didascalia* chap. 24–25; *CA* 6.12–14; 8.46.13; 8.47.85) as well as citing canonical writings much more frequently and explicitly as a means of authenticating themselves (see Metzger 1985: 1.34–38). Conversely, citations of Gospel texts in the *ACO* are not exact and are not identified as such (compare *ACO* 20.1 with Mtt 18:16 and 2 Cor 13:1; and *ACO* 22.2 with Mtt 25:37, 42).

Moreover, and this is the issue most central to the argument here, the author chooses to include Martha and Mary as authoritative speakers. It is not simply the case that a commonly known tradition involving Martha and Mary is invoked in order to settle the case: in that case the *ACO* could have simply eliminated the speech of Martha and Mary or placed their speech into the mouth of another apostle. The fact that the text gives voice to Martha and Mary with the identical construction to the way in which the text gives voice to the apostles renders their voices authoritative. There are two ways in which this might function. On the one hand, a text which is set in the context of a discussion of the full college of the apostles lays claim to a vision of apostolic unity. To grant voice to Martha and Mary in such a context in effect renders them members of this college of apostles. It has already been demonstrated that Martha can speak with great authority—as a ‘second Peter’ (so Ps.Eustathius) and ‘apostle to the apostles’ (so Hippolytus). In view of these, her appearance in an apostolic council is by no means unique or out of keeping with the status and authority accorded her elsewhere.

On the other hand, it has also been observed that apostolic figures are attached to certain traditions and can be played off against each other: Thomas against John, John against Peter, Peter against Mary

(Riley 1995; Brock 1999). In this case the authority of Martha and Mary might consist not merely in their being considered apostolic figures but (also) in their connection to specific traditions. If Peter, John and Cephas appear in the *ACO* as representatives of certain traditions, and as authority figures that can be played off against each other, it is conceivable that Martha could do likewise. In her case, such an association with particular traditions is not likely to be as extensive and elaborate as the traditions associated with John, Thomas and Philip. Nonetheless, the close connection of Martha with διακονία fits a similar pattern. If Philip and Thomas 'stand for' certain gnostic groups and Peter 'stands for' the great church, Martha appears to 'stand for' women's διακονία. Martha's participation in the discussion thus appears both as an indicator of her apostolic authority and as an authority particularly connected to a tradition of women's ministry, here conceived explicitly as ministry at the Eucharist.

The speeches of Martha and Mary both serve to underscore the exclusion of women from leading at the Eucharist, as does the recalled narrative of the Last Supper. On the one hand, therefore, Martha and Mary appear as champions for the position of the redactor. The inappropriate behaviour of Mary serves as a precedent for the exclusion of other women and, as in the Lukan text, Martha stands as her accuser. Only in this instance Jesus does not come to the rescue of Mary; rather the Lord appears as the one who did not allow the women to stand with the apostles at the Supper, granting dominical sanction to the exclusion of women. The narrative as it thus emerges from the *ACO* appears to have precisely the rhetorical intent that Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) has proposed for the Lukan Martha story, though sharpened to remove the ambiguity concerning its interpretation. Whether the *ACO* stands in a trajectory with Luke 10:38–42, that is, whether it derives some of its ideas, characters and agenda from this narrative, is another question. It suggests, however, that Schüssler Fiorenza's reading, which sets Martha, Mary and διακονία in the context of the Eucharist, is by no means solely modern. Furthermore, whether or not one imputes a direct connection of διακονία to the Eucharistic table already in the Lukan text, once such a connection is made, the Lukan narrative lends itself to such an interpretation. This raises the question whether a narrative placing Martha and Mary at the Last Supper might derive not from an apocryphal text, but might grow out of the exegesis and elaboration of canonical texts (see 8.8 below).

Thus far it has been assumed that the tradition of Martha and Mary at the Last Supper has been cited by the *ACO* because this tradition illustrates and supports the position which the text advocates. This implies that the *ACO* and the tradition which it cites concur. It is also possible that the *ACO* incorporates the tradition in order to subvert it. If stories associated with Thecla could be used to argue for women's right to teach and baptise (so Tertullian, *de bapt* 17.4–5),[37] could stories associated with Martha and Mary be used to justify women's right to officiate at the Eucharist? In that case the inclusion of Martha and Mary is a matter of co-opting the champions of the opposition. If the strongest argument for the inclusion of women in leadership at the Eucharist is a narrative precedent set by Martha and Mary, then one highly effective way of countering this precedent might be to present these very women as the spokespersons for the opposing view. This is the rhetorical strategy of the Pastorals and the *Acts of Paul*: the voice of the apostle is adopted to ensure the correct interpretation of the apostle and to co-opt the authority of the apostle for the preferred interpretation of the Pauline tradition (see D.R. MacDonald 1983; M.Y. MacDonald 1999b). Perhaps the inclusion of Martha and Mary as participants in the dialogue of the *ACO* represents the same strategy of co-opting speakers and traditions that are used to support the ministry of women at the Eucharist in order to reinterpret them, or to neutralise their authority.

It is significant that neither Martha nor Mary is given the final word on the subject: the introduction of the question by Peter ("Let us carefully explain regarding the offering of the Body and Blood," chap. 25) and the conclusion by James ("how then can we establish a ministry for the women, except the ministry of supporting women in need?" chap. 28) frame the discussion. Just as the text uses certain strategies to moderate the authority of John or of Johannine tradition, so the way in which Martha and Mary appear in the text could imply that the *ACO* seeks to moderate their authority. Further evidence that could support such a reading of Martha in the *ACO* derives from another text, the *Acts of Philip*, in which Martha and Mary serve as role-models for the inclusion of women in ministry, and specifically at the Eucharist. It is consequently worth examining this text in some detail, to allow these two texts to illuminate each other, before drawing further conclusions about the *ACO* and its characterisation of Martha.

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[37] This text has evoked a wealth of scholarship concerning the text-critical difficulties it presents, the significance of the comment for the identification and authorship of the *Acts of Paul*, and its implications for the interpretation of women in early Christianity and, in particular, the role of Thecla. None of these need concern us here. It might be noted in passing, however, that Ng has recently challenged the scholarly consensus which interprets this text "to mean that [Tertullian] is aware of people actually appealing to the *APThl* in support of women's right to teach and baptize" (2004: 21; scholars who express the consensus view include Schüssler Fiorenza 1983: 54; MacDonald 1984: 27; Kaestli 1990a: 293; Boughton 1991: 376; Dunn 1993: 245–246; and Davis 2001: 12–13). Ng's argument is not convincing, however. More compelling is the insightful analysis of McInerney (2003: 15–45) who, contrasting Tertullian's response to Thecla with his response to Perpetua, suggests that it is precisely the issue of role models, and the behaviour they might justify, which is at stake in this text (see also Nolan 2000).

8.6 The *Acts of Philip*

The *Acts of Philip* (*A. Phil.*) is a compilation of narratives associated with Philip, a composite figure fusing the apostle with the evangelist known from the canonical texts. The text is made up of a number of distinct sections. *A. Phil.* 8–15 is clearly distinct from *A. Phil.* 2–7, and the first Act, as well as the martyrdom, appear to have circulated independently (Amsler 1999: 20–22, 431–434). While the various parts of the *Acts* originated independently, they nevertheless reveal a certain unity not only in the central figure of Philip, but also in the encratic ideals espoused by the text (Otero 1992: 469). While scholarly consensus holds that the *Acts* in their current form derive from encratic circles in Asia Minor, more specifically Phrygia, from the fourth century (Junod and Kaestli 1982: 30; Bovon 1988a: 4522; Amsler 1999: 437–439), "the question of the authorship and origin of individual parts remains open" (Otero 1992: 469). Moreover, the remarkable difference in length between the two major extant manuscripts of the *Acts* (*Xenophontos 32* [A] and *Vaticanus Graecus 824* [V]) attests to the revision of the *Acts* over time. The longer manuscript is taken to be the more original, while the shorter reflects a later revision that has adapted the material to the community's changing circumstances (Slater 1999; Amsler 1999: 4; description of the manuscripts in Bovon 1988a: 4468–4475; critical edition of the text in Bovon, Bouvier, and Amsler 1999).

The *Acts* have drawn the attention of scholars in recent years as a witness to the struggles between the majority church and encratic groups in Asia Minor. The text includes a 'tour of hell' which gives the impression of a community involved in a severe conflict.

> One hears in this tour echoes of intense conflict between the *Acts of Philip* community and the majority church. In the third scene (*APh* 1.7) the sin of insulting the "most chaste virgin... dishonoring her in the eyes of bystanders" may speak, in veiled terms, of a struggle with religious authority in which ascetics were compelled to renounce their asceticism and make false confessions. The seventh scene (*APh* 1.13) is similarly laden with thinly veiled language attacking those who attend the altar. (Slater 1999: 297)

It is clear that women hold a significant place in the community of the *Acts*. One list in the tour of hell accuses a man and woman of having blasphemed "against priests (πρεσβυτέρους), priestesses (πρεσβύτιδας), eunuchs (εὐνούχους), deacons (διακόνους), deaconesses (διακονίσσας), virgins (παρθένους)" (1.12 [A]; Bovon 2003: 29; see Bovon 1988a: 29; Slater 1999; other evidence for women office-bearers in Asia Minor is provided by Eisen 1996; Hofman 2000). The disciples of Peter are said to have included women "who imitated the male faith" (αἵτινες ἐμιμήσαντο τὴν πίστιν τὴν ἀρρενικήν, 3.1), which Peterson (1932: 98) interprets as indicating their participation in the community's ascetic praxis (see also 4.5–6). The asceticism of the community is expressed in food (1.2), clothes (4.4; 5.14) and the rejection of marriage (1.2; 5.8). Alongside celibacy, vegetarianism and ascetic clothing, the community required the manumission of slaves (6.17; Peterson 1932: 100).

The conflict depicted in *A. Phil.* 1 matches well with the condemnations of the Eustathians at the Council of Gangra and the writings of Amphilochius of Iconium, in particular *Contra haereticos* (Peterson 1932; Amsler 1999: 78–80, 475–477; Slater 1999). Amsler (1996; 1999: 302–312) has further demonstrated that *A. Phil.* 8 engages with the cult of Cybele in Hierapolis.

The interest in the *Acts of Philip* here lies chiefly in a single reference made in the *Acts* to Martha, in 8.2. In this regard it is worth noting the judgment of Amsler (1999: 286) that *Acts* 8–15 represent the oldest part of the text.[38]

Before turning to the text, a final word on the manuscripts is in order. It was noted that the most important manuscripts of the *Acts of Philip* are *Vaticanus Graecus 824* (V), from the eleventh century, and Athens *Xenophontos 32* (A), from the fourteenth. The latter breaks off after the first few lines of Act 8 however; the rest of the Act, including the reference to Martha, has been lost. The act is preserved in another fifteenth-century manuscript, *Bibliotheque nationale 346* (G), which only preserves the first half of act 8 (8.1–15), but in a form much longer than *Vaticanus graecus 824* (V). This longer version of G is taken to be more original, though Amsler (1999: 289) also judges that V preserves a good witness of the primitive text.

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[38] The tradition associating Philip with Hierapolis is attested from the end of the second century (see Amsler 1999: 441–468).

8.7 Martha in the *Acts of Philip*

Acts of Philip 8 opens with an account of the distribution of mission fields among the apostles and as such represents a new beginning with no immediate connection to the foregoing (Amsler 1999: 285). The Saviour sends Philip "to the land of the Greeks" (8.1), a decision which displeases Philip who begins to cry (8.2). Thereupon Mariamne appears for the first time in the *Acts* to intervene on her brother's behalf. It is at this point that the text inserts a comment regarding Martha.

The longer manuscript (G) reads,

> ὅτε δὲ ἔκλαυσεν ἐστράθη πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ σωτὴρ μετὰ Ἰωάννου καὶ Μαριάμνης τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτοῦ (αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἔχουσα τὴν ἀναγραθὴν τῶν χωρῶν, καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἑτοιμάζουσα τὸν ἄρτον καὶ τὸ ἅλας, καὶ τὴν κλάσιν τοῦ ἄρτου. ἡ δὲ Μάρθα αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ διακονοῦσα τοῖς πλήθεσιν καὶ κοπιῶσα σφόδρα). ἡ δὲ Μαριάμνη ἐλάλησε μετὰ τοῦ σωτῆρος περὶ Φιλίππου, ἐπειδὴ ἦν ὀδυνωμενος διὰ τὴν πόλιν εἰς ἣν ἀπεστέλλο. (8.2 [G])
>
> When he cried, the Saviour turned to him with John and Mariamne his sister (for she is the one having the register of the countries, and she is the one preparing the bread and the salt, and the breaking of the bread. And Martha is the one serving the many and working hard). But Mariamne spoke with the Saviour concerning Philip, seeing he was afflicted because of the city to which he was sent.

The text differs at a number of interesting points from the shorter version of V which reads,

> ἡ δὲ Μαριάμνη ἡ τούτου ἀδελφή (αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἑτοιμάζουσα τὸν ἄρτον καὶ τὸ ἅλας ἐν τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου, ἡ δὲ Μάρθα ἐστὶν ἡ διακονοῦσα τοῖς πλήθεσιν καὶ κοπιῶσα σφόδρα) ἰδοῦσα τὸν ἴδιον ἀδελφὸν βαρέως φέροντα τὸν λαχόντα αὐτῷ κλῆρον, καὶ ὅτι σφοδρῶς ἔκλαιε περὶ τούτου, προσῆλθεν τῷ Ἰησοῦ λέγουσα· Κύριέ μου Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, οὐχ ὁρᾷς τὸν ἀδελφόν μου Φίλιππον ὅσον λελύπηται διὰ τὴν χώραν τῶν Ἑλλήνων; (8.2 [V])

> But Mariamne his sister (for she is the one preparing the bread and the salt in the breaking of the bread, and Martha is the one serving the many and working hard), seeing her own brother carrying the burden of the lot assigned him, and how hard he was crying about this, went to Jesus saying, 'My Lord Jesus Christ, do you not see my brother Philip, how vexed he is on account of the country of the Greeks?'

Notable is the absence of John in V which renders Mariamne the sister of Philip, rather than the sister of John as in G. Since G later also designates Mariamne as sister of Philip (8.4) and names Peter as Philip's brother (8.12), this sibling language is not to be taken as denoting a blood relationship.[39]

Of greater significance is the demonstrative pronoun (αὕτη) that follows the naming of Martha in G, for while the shorter reading of V makes it clear that Martha and Mariamne are two different persons, the inclusion of the pronoun allows an alternative reading of G in which this pronoun, like its previous two occurrences, all refer to Mariamne:

> for she (αὕτη) is the one holding the register of the countries, and she (αὕτη) is the one preparing the bread and the salt and the breaking of the bread. A Martha is she (αὕτη), serving the many and working hard.

This interpretation has in its favour that all three αὕτη clauses then refer to the same person. Moreover, it seems strange to introduce a new character here who will play no part in the subsequent narrative. Thus the editors of the text propose this alternative reading, suggesting that Mariamne may here be described as a 'new Martha,' "ce nom désignant proverbialement la femme commise aux humbles taches domestiques" (Bovon, Bouvier, and Amsler 1999: 241 n. 6).

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[39] Similarly in the martyrdom Philip describes Mariamne to Bartholomew as "our sister" (ἡ ἀδελφή ἡμῶν 36 [V]). Conversely, Bovon (2002: 80) makes the curious deduction that the 'sister' of Philip cannot be Mary Theotokos because that would render Philip the uncle of Jesus. This observation is doubly strange because later in the same article Bovon concedes that "the terms *sister* and *brother* became terms for several dimensions of a non-sexual relationship between male and female Christians" (2002: 87). Not only is the language of 'sister/brother' not typically to be read literally, but there is evidence that texts regularly create novel familial relationships. For example, the Synaxarion of Constantinople identifies Salome as the mother of John the Evangelist and son of Zebedee and Martha as her sister (Delehaye 1902: 87–88). While Bovon observes that the *Acts of Philip* apply to Mariamne "titles, metaphors, and functions applied to the mother in patristic texts" (2002: 89), he nevertheless remains convinced that Mariamne is to be identified with Mary Magdalene. It seems equally plausible to me that Mariamne here is to be understood as the Theotokos or as a composite figure.

The survey of Martha texts thus far has amply illustrated that any 'proverbial' designation of Martha as 'woman committed to humble domestic tasks' is modern, rather than ancient. Thus, if Mariamne is here designated 'a new Martha,' it is unlikely that the point of comparison intends to imply either humility or domesticity. The only other similar comparison of which I am aware is Gregory of Nyssa's description of his sister Macrina as a new Thecla (Maraval 1971). The manner in which this comparison is made is quite different, however. It appears in a dream and the name Thecla is explicitly assigned to Macrina by a heavenly being (see Davis 2001: 62–64). This designation of Macrina as a Thecla is clearly intended to elevate her. Similarly, given the positive role assigned to Mariamne in the *Acts of Philip*, if the text here intends to identify her with Martha, the comparison is certainly intended to elevate, not denigrate her. Consequently, if this is the preferred reading of the text, it suggests that Martha holds a place of high esteem in the community, in particular, it would seem, for her role as διακονοῦσα and κοπιῶσα.

The description of Martha as ἡ διακονοῦσα τοῖς πλήθεσιν καὶ κοπιῶσα σφόδρα is strikingly different from Luke 10:38–42. The participle form διακονοῦσα more closely recalls Matthew 27:55, where a group of women are said to have followed and 'served' Jesus. Moreover, while the Lukan Martha is 'worried' (μεριμνᾷς), 'troubled' (θορυβάζῃ) and 'drawn away' (περιεσπᾶτο) by her service, there are no such negative connotations here. In the Pauline writings κοπιᾶν is closely associated with apostolic labours (1 Cor 4:12; 15:10; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; Col 1:29; Richardson 1986: 259 n. 22) and has even been considered a technical term referring to missionary work (so Castelli 1999: 225; with reference particularly to Mary, Tryphaena and Tryphosa in Rom 16:6, 12. For a slightly different reading which also retains the element of physical work entailed in κοπιᾶν see Schottroff 1998: 196–200). Philippi (1981: 622) suggests the term might be one of a number of "Übergangsformen" between the charismatic leadership of the earliest communities and the later office bearers.

The description of Martha as κοπιῶσα matches the Pauline designation of the leaders in Thessalonica and Corinth as κοπιῶντες (1 Thess 5:12; 1 Cor 16:16). This, as well as the combination of κοπιᾶν and διακονεῖν, evoke the depiction of the leadership in the earliest communities. If the description of Martha as διακονοῦσα…καὶ κοπιῶσα has been derived from Luke, then it has been revised to remove all negative connotations. Her 'serving' and 'hard working' evokes the faithful service of the women at the cross and the apostles and missionaries, not the distracted service that is rebuked in Luke 10:38–42. Furthermore, the context of the passage sets the serving of Martha within "the breaking of the bread" (τὴν κλάσιν τοῦ ἄρτου [G] / ἐν τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου [V]). This phrase has been read as a reference to the Eucharist (Bovon, Bouvier, and Amsler 1999: 240 n. 5) and to the *agape* (Peterson 1932: 107).

Peterson's argument for interpreting *A. Phil.* 8.2 as a reference to an *agape* rather than the Eucharist is based on canon 11 of the synod of Gangra. The canon states,

> If anyone shall despise those who out of faith make love-feasts and invite the brethren in honour of the Lord, and is not willing to accept these invitations because he despises what is done, let him be anathema. (*NPNF II* 14.96)

Peterson observes that *A. Phil.* 5.8 describes the refusal of Philip to enter the house of Ireos until he has separated from his wife and suggests that the canon has in view the refusal of encratic groups to participate in *agape* feasts with married people. He also sees a distinction between *agape* and Eucharist in *A. Phil.* 7.7 which describes a meal at the departure of Philip from the community. Here Philip takes only five loaves of bread, a reference which recalls the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, rather than the institution of the Eucharist. Conversely, Peterson suggests that the elevation of the cup (ποτήριον) in *A. Phil.* 9.2–3 might refer to the Eucharist.

The interpretation of Peterson is possible, but is based on a number of assumptions that might not hold. He presumes a clear separation between *agape* and Eucharist. It is not at all clear, however, that such a separation was maintained in early Christian communities (cf. *Didache* 9–10; Niederwimmer 1998: 141–143; Keating 1969; Rordorf 1978: 3–9; Townsend 1979), let alone that it was maintained specifically in the communities of the *Acts of Philip*. Moreover, Peterson (1932: 106) himself had observed that while the *Acts* align closely with the practices condemned at Gangra, one cannot deduce that the *Acts* offer a faithful image of these ascetics. The same applies to the canons of Gangra. It cannot be assumed that they offer a neutral, accurate and comprehensive description of the practices they condemn. Given the uncertainty over the origin of the *Acts* and their redaction, care needs to be taken in using a text from one document to interpret a text from the other. Finally, Peterson's argument assumes that the failure to mention any cup in

A. Phil. 8.2 means that there was no cup, while conversely the explicit mention of such a cup in 9.2–3 renders this text a more likely reference to the Eucharist in his view. It is entirely possible, however, that "the breaking of the bread" is a designation for the meal and therefore does not preclude the inclusion of a cup (cf. Acts 2:42; *Did.* 14.1).

A comparable use of bread and salt in a Eucharistic context appears in the Pseudo-Clementine homilies. Homily 14 recounts the baptism of Clement's mother Mattidia. After the baptism, Peter,

> breaking the bread for the Eucharist, and putting salt upon it (τὸν ἄρτον ἐπ' εὐχαριστίᾳ κλάσας καὶ ἐπιθεὶς ἅλας),…gave it first to our mother, and, after her, to us her sons. (*Hom.* 14.1.4; *ANF* 8.305; Rehm and Strecker 1992: 204)

Similarly the letter of Peter to James which opens these homilies charges the recipients of the book to stand beside the baptismal font and make a solemn declaration (*Cont.* 1.2) prior to sharing a bread and salt meal with the one who handed over the books (4.3).

Strecker claims that these bread and salt meals are not to be interpreted Eucharistically because such a conclusion

> wäre nur möglich, wenn auch an anderer Stelle eine judenchristliche Eucharistie mit Brot und Salz bezeugt wäre. Aber das ist weder für die Kerygmen noch in der außerklementinischen Literatur der Fall. (1981: 210; cf. Salzmann 1994: 308–311)[40]

McGowan rightly critiques this approach which is based on

> the familiar and unsatisfactory assumption that a Eucharist must contain certain elements not present here, and for that matter on the assumption of a normative unity of eucharistic meal practice which dismisses unique evidence precisely as unique. (1999: 121)

He argues convincingly that

> the language of giving thanks or of blessing (or both) is used with regard to the taking of food (*Hom.* 10.26.2, 12.25.1, *Recog.* 2.72.6). While there is no mention of the Last Supper or of the body and blood of Jesus, these factors along with the association with baptism (*Cont.*) all indicate that these descriptions are comprehensible as the eucharistic meal of the Christian community, or as much of a eucharistic meal as this community or communities knew or cared to know. (ibid.)

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[40] "…would only be possible, if a Jewish-Christian Eucharist with bread and salt were also attested elsewhere. However, that is neither the case for the *Kerygmata Petrou*, nor for the non-Clementine literature."

This means in turn that there is at least one other text that suggests the use of bread and salt in Eucharistic meals. Since the pseudo-Clementines and the *Acts of Philip* both reveal an ascetic milieu, the use of salt might be related particularly to this ascetic orientation of the communities (so McGowan 1999: 123).

The *Acts of Philip* also uses different terminology for the Eucharist elsewhere (*A. Phil.* 11.1; 11.10; *A. Phil. Mart.* 33). Given the comparable use of bread and salt in the Pseudo-Clementines, and the evident redactional history of the *Acts*, it seems preferable not to assume either a consistent terminology between different acts, or a categorical distinction between meals purely on the basis of a difference in terminology. The difference in terminology might reflect no more than different redactional strata. Nor is it evident that "receiving the Eucharist of the Saviour" (μέλλοντες τῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος εὐχαριστίας, 11.1) and "breaking of the bread" (κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου, 8.2) refer to categorically different meals, rather than either to the same meal, or to different aspects of the same meal. Not only is there a danger of importing a distinction between 'Eucharist' and 'agape' which may not have existed in the community, but there is the concomitant danger of assuming that 'the Eucharist' is more significant than 'the breaking of the bread,' implicitly (and incorrectly) rendering the latter 'profane.' For these reasons it is preferable to interpret the 'breaking of the bread' Eucharistically, as does McGowan, who concludes that "the *Acts of Philip* seem to allow a glimpse of a Eucharistic meal where salt was used in addition to bread in a deliberate fashion" (1999: 123).

The *Acts of Philip* depicts Mariamne and Martha engaged in preparing and serving a Eucharistic meal. This activity neither evokes protest, nor draws attention. It has been suggested that the *Acts* knows the *ACO*. Indeed, Peterson considers the reference to κανόνες established by Philip (*A. Phil.* 6.22) as an explicit reference to the *ACO* (Peterson 1932: 107 n. 1; see also Zahn 1900: 24 n. 3). This seems implausible due to the radically different treatment of women in the two texts. If the communities of the *Acts of Philip* knew the *ACO*, indeed considered them authoritative as rules given by Philip, it seems unlikely that Martha and Mary could be linked to 'serving' and 'breaking of the bread' with such positive connotation and without further comment.

More likely the *Acts of Philip* attest a similar connection of Martha and Mary to Eucharistic meals and perhaps to the Last Supper. This tradition is received and used very differently in the *Acts* to the way it is received and used in the *ACO*. It is intriguing in this regard that *A. Phil.* 8 also makes reference to the contrast between male and female, weakness and strength in this context. When Mariamne intercedes with the Saviour on behalf of her brother, he replies,

> I know that you are good and brave in your soul (ἀνδρεία τῇ ψυχῇ) and blessed among women. A feminine spirit (τὸ…φρόνημα τῶν γυναικῶν) has entered Philip, while the male and courageous spirit (τὸ…φρόνημα τὸ ἀρρενικὸν καὶ ἀνδρεῖον) is in you. (8.3 [G]; see Bovon 2002: 85)

While Martha appears only here in the *Acts*, Mariamne plays a highly significant role in *A. Phil.* 8–15. She accompanies Philip and Bartholomew on their travels, baptises (*A. Phil.* 14.9; *A. Phil. Mart.* 2), preaches (*A. Phil. Mart.* 3; 9) and shares in their martyrdom. When her persecutors try to strip her naked, her body is transformed into a κιβωτὸς ὑελίνη, a "shrine of glass" (*A.Phil. Mart.* 20 [A]). Not only is κιβωτός the term used in the Septuagint for Noah's ark (Gen 6:14) and the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:10), but Bovon suggests it "is also the term that the Christian liturgy applies in a typological way to the Virgin Mary, referring to her as the receptacle of God's presence" (2002: 84).

Mariamne appears as a fully apostolic figure who participates in all aspects of the ministry of the apostles. Czachesz goes so far as to suggest that in the call narrative of 8.2–4,

> Mariamne is an alter ego of Philip, rather than simply his helper. She talks with Jesus on his behalf, and she has to go everywhere with him. (2002: 144; see also Bovon 2002: 86–88)

She is called "to the sufferings of martyrdom and the redemption of the whole world" (τῳ πάθει τοῦ μαρτυρίου καὶ τῆς ἐκλυτρώσεως ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, 8.3 [G]). The figure of Mariamne is beyond the purview here. What is highly significant about the text, however, is Bovon's observation that

> Mariamne was not only a famous figure of the past. She was also the model and the justification for the present women's ministry. Those women who are called virgins, deaconesses, or priestesses could find an example to follow and to imitate in the figure of Mariamne. (2002: 89)

Precisely such a justification for a present women's ministry through the model of Martha and Mary appears to form the background for the appearance of Martha and Mary in the *ACO*.

8.8 CONCLUSIONS

In both the *ACO* and the *Acts of Philip* Martha's διακονία is set in an explicitly Eucharistic context. These two texts reveal strikingly different attitudes to women's ministry, however. Where the *ACO* had raised the possibility of a διακονία for women at the Eucharist and dismissed it, the *Acts of Philip* depicts Mariamne and Martha engaged in 'preparing' and 'serving' the meal. Moreover, while the question of such a ministry for women was a matter of intense concern and argument for the *ACO*, it appears without further comment in the *Acts of Philip*.

The inclusion of Martha and Mary in the *ACO* suggests that there was an early Christian tradition placing Martha and Mary at the Last Supper. The way in which this text has included the women is significant, both in giving voice to the women and in granting them apostolic status as the only participants beside the twelve in the discussion. I have proposed that this manner of including Martha and Mary might indicate that these figures, and stories associated with them, could be used to justify women's participation at the Eucharist. It is precisely because Martha can be used as a precedent for women's leadership at the Eucharist that her voice speaking *against* such a praxis is so powerful. The *Acts of Philip* offers some support for this theory, since it includes a reference to Martha that sets her in a Eucharistic context and approves of her 'serving' in this situation. Moreover, the significant role played by Mariamne in this text, who not only participates in the 'breaking of the bread,' but appears as an equal participant in the full range of the apostolic ministry of Philip, suggests that she serves precisely such a role of modeling and justifying the inclusion of women in ministry roles. It is clear, therefore, that Martha and Mary do not only appear in the context of the Eucharist as a means of excluding women, but also as a means of including them.

Mary is included among the apostles at the Eucharist also in the Coptic *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle* (Budge 1913: 204). Indeed, it names her as a celebrant at the Eucharist: "elle fit la συναχις avec eux" (Revillout 1946–57: 1.194; on σύναχις as a term for the Eucharist see Brakmann 1971: 200–201). Here the Mary concerned is the mother of Jesus (Budge 1913: 212). Martha does not appear at the Eucharist in this text, but she is included among the witnesses of the resurrection (Budge 1913: 187–188, 192, 212). The text is unusual in identifying Mary as the serving one and

Martha as the sister: ⲙⲛ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲧⲣⲉϥⲇⲓⲁⲕⲱⲛⲉⲓ—ⲙⲛ ⲙⲁⲣⲑⲁ ⲧⲉⲥⲥⲑⲛⲉ (Revillout 1946: 188).[41]

The 'serving Martha' of John 12:2 could also fit in this context. For it has been suggested that the meal in John 12 likewise is to be read Eucharistically (e.g., Yamaguchi 2002: 121). In Matthew, Mark and John the Last Supper narratives are all preceded immediately by the account of the anointing in Bethany, which "suggests that they were connected in the tradition" (Tetlow 1980: 123). Schneiders finds that

> the supper at Bethany…does seem to be evocative of Eucharist, and within that perspective it is worth noting that Jesus is the guest of honor and Martha and Mary are the ministers, a presentation of Eucharist that would fit well in the setting of Johannine community. (2003: 107–108)

Not only can διακονία be read in reference to a recognised ministry, as was observed in the last chapter, but Corell has suggested that "if any established ministry existed in the Johannine community, it was probably that of deacon" (so Schneiders 2003: 107; citing Corell 1958: 40–42).

If the Johannine text is read in this way, the depiction of Martha as one who serves at a Eucharist appears equally approvingly and nonchalantly in the Fourth Gospel as it does in the *Acts of Philip*. Nor is it surprising, in the Johannine context, to find Martha serving and Lazarus reclining; Martha engaged in ministry and Lazarus receiving this ministry. For, as was noted in chapter 2, it is Martha who proclaims the Johannine faith most clearly, Martha who appears in the apostolic role in which Peter appears in the Gospel of Matthew. Similarly, it is a woman who converts many by her testimony (Jn 4:39) and a woman who proclaims, "I have seen the Lord" (20:18). That women should be depicted in ministry roles at the Eucharist would be consistent with the depiction of women elsewhere in the Gospel (see Lee 1993: 13–15; Schneiders 2003: 93–114).[42]

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[41] The dating of the text and the traditions it preserves is disputed: Schneemelcher judges the Coptic text to be no older than the fifth to seventh centuries, though he proposes that it draws on a stream of tradition deriving from the third or fourth centuries (Schneemelcher 1991a: 557). Haase (1915: 109) opts for a much earlier date, positing the third century for the first recension.

[42] Much depends at this point on the way in which the female characters in Fourth Gospel are read; whether as representatives of groups within the Johannine community (so, for example, Brown 1975; Rena 1986), as figures that are, or represent, real historical members and leaders of the community (so, for example, D'Angelo 1990b; 1999b;

It will be recalled that the *ACO* not only refers to a known tradition placing Martha and Mary at the Last Supper, but also demonstrates a particular interest in moderating Johannine traditions. This too could be consistent with an interpretation of John 12 as a referring to a Eucharistic meal. Could such an interpretation be sufficient 'source' for the vignette involving Martha and Mary in the *ACO*? Rather than positing a hypothetical lost source, it might then rather be the case that the *ACO* is countering a particular interpretation of John 12 by some who used the depiction of Martha 'serving' in John 12:2 as precedent and justification for a Eucharistic ministry for women. Not only is this proposal consistent with the place accorded to John in the *ACO*, but it also provides a neat solution which both eliminates the hypothetical lost source and explains the need for such strong argumentation in this instance. Given the familiarity with, and preference for, the Fourth Gospel evident in the list of disciples, a practice grounded in this Gospel has strong apostolic support.[43] It was suggested that pseudo-apostolicity is a strategy particularly in cases where authoritative texts cannot be cited, precisely because the interpretation of these texts is a matter of dispute. Perhaps Martha and Mary are given voice here precisely because the Johannine texts cannot serve as authority or have been claimed as authority by the opponents.

Stories serve as evidence. "The past is appropriated to *legitimize* particular sociopolitical goals and ideologies and to *mobilize* action in accord with these goals" (Kirk 2005: 11–12). In the texts analysed here,

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1999c; de Boer 2000) or purely symbolically (for example, Stockton 1979). Some have suggested Mary functions as the symbolic (or real) bride of the Messiah (Twycross 1996; Brant 1996; Fehribach 1998) or concentrated on the erotic element in the anointing and the allusions to the Song of Songs (Winsor 1999). In these cases the anointing and the relationship between Jesus and Mary move to the foreground and possible connections to the Eucharist might appear contrived or irrelevant.

The need to interpret John 12:1–8 within the context of the whole Gospel, both in terms of the roles of women within it and the presentation of the Last Supper (narratively and theologically) renders this a task that extends beyond the bounds of what is possible within the constraints here. Suffice it, therefore, to raise the possibility that the serving Martha of John 12:2 might be interpreted Eucharistically and would thereby match the characterisation of Martha in the *ACO* and *Acts of Philip*, but to leave the detailed argumentation or refutation of this suggestion for another time.

[43] Of course it is possible that another, now lost, source or tradition had equal status in the community—and it was noted that the *ACO* preserves traditions associated with Cephas which Faivre (1992: 59) judges authentic. At the same time it seems preferable to reach for hypothetical lost sources only when the extant sources do not suffice. John 12:1–8 and its interpretation as a Last Supper meal might be sufficient in this instance.

Martha stories are used to limit and to legitimise the participation of women at the Eucharist, much as 'the example of Thecla' could be used in support of the right of women to baptise (Tertullian *de bapt.* 17.4–5). This in turn indicates that Martha served both as role model and as authority figure in early Christian communities. This has already been observed in relation to her role as witness and apostle in the Easter narrative. It is also evident in a number of other texts which present Martha as disciple of Jesus and authority figure for early Christian groups which are examined next.

CHAPTER NINE

MARTHA AS AUTHORITY FIGURE FOR EARLY CHRISTIAN GROUPS

I have proposed that, just as some used the tradition of Thecla to justify women's right to teach and to baptise (Tertullian, *de bapt.* 17.5), stories of Martha could be used to justify women's right to lead at the Eucharist. This explains her inclusion particularly in the *Apostolic Church Order*, which uses Martha to counter precisely such an argument. While Tertullian countered the Thecla tradition by undermining its authenticity, the redactor of the *ACO* countered the Martha tradition by making her a spokesperson for his own position. This reading of the *ACO*, and in particular of Martha's role within the text, is consistent with the way Martha appears in other early Christian texts, including a number of the texts already surveyed. It will be recalled, for example, that the Hippolytan *Commentary on the Song of Songs* names Martha as apostle to the apostles. That Martha functioned as an authority figure for some early Christians is also evident in a number of other texts that will be examined here. The most striking of these is a comment made by Origen, that

> Celsus knows, moreover, certain Marcellians, so called from Marcellina, and Harpocratians from Salome, and others who derive their name from Mariamme, and others again from Martha. We, however, who from a love of learning examine to the utmost of our ability not only the contents of Scripture, and the differences to which they give rise, but have also, from love to the truth, investigated as far as we could the opinions of philosophers, have never at any time met with these sects. (*C. Cels.* 5.62; *ANF* 4.571)

Celsus claims that there were some early Christians who derived their name from Martha. Was there a group in the third century named after Martha? This would certainly suggest that she was a significant authority figure in her own right. If not, what might the comment of Celsus have intended?

9.1 Celsus and Martha

The writings of Celsus are preserved only in the citations of Origen who wrote a refutation of them during the reign of Philip the Arab (244–249 CE; so Eusebius *HE* 6.36.1–3. Frede 1999: 131 finds no reason to question this date. See also Quasten 1950: 2.37–101; Nautin 1977). The origin of Celsus' Ἀληθὴς λόγος, ('On the true doctrine') is usually dated around 180 CE (Rosenbaum 1972). According to Origen Celsus knows two groups, "Marcellians from Marcellina and Harpocratians from Salome" (Μαρκελλιανοὺς ἀπὸ Μαρκελλίνας καὶ Ἁρποκρατιανοὺς ἀπὸ Σαλώμης, 5.62; Borret 1967–1976: 3.168). Celsus then adds two more groups distinguished from these two: "and others from Mariamme and others from Martha" (καὶ ἄλλους ἀπὸ Μαριάμμης καὶ ἄλλους ἀπὸ Μάρθας). Two things are striking about this list. First, Irenaeus reports that Marcellina was active as a teacher of the doctrines of Carpocrates in the middle of the second century in Rome (*Adv. Haer.* 1.25.6; see also Epiphanius *Pan.* 27.6; Lampe 1989: 269–270). Hence Celsus here seems to be distinguishing two groups (Marcellians and Harpocratians) that were identical or had initially belonged together (Jensen 1992: 369 n. 26; Petersen 1999: 220).[1] Petersen (1999: 220) supposes that Marcellina might have been so successful as a teacher, that a group named itself after her. Be that as it may, both Marcellina and the Carpocratians can be documented as historical entities of the second century. The other three women, however, derive from the canonical Gospels (and other early Christian literature) and as such differ significantly from Marcellina and the Carpocratians.

It is of course possible that a group might name itself after a New Testament woman. After all, much early Christian literature is associated with an authority figure—usually with a figure known from canonical texts. As Bovon has pointed out, an

> author's choice of apostle was neither innocent nor arbitrary. It is not without significance that the apocryphal Acts closest to the Great Church, founded by Peter and Paul, were the *Acts of Peter* and *Acts of Paul.* In choosing Andrew, Philip, Thomas or John the other writers were divulging their preferences and their convictions. They were affiliating themselves with men who had been neglected by the Great Church; but celebrated by the Gospel of John, the most marginal of the canonical writings, and

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[1] The names Harpocrates and Carpocrates are interchangeable (Petersen 1999: 220 n. 93).

> then by dissident movements. Tell me the name of your apostle and I will tell you who you are. (1995: 169)

He makes this observation in relation to the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, but it holds equally for other early Christian literature: epistles and Gospels are likewise associated with significant figures. While the choice of authority figure is more often male, women also served in this capacity, as demonstrated by the literature attributed to Mary (*Gospel of Mary, Questions of Mary*). What is notable, however, is that typically it is literature which is named after the New Testament figures, rather than groups. The various 'heretical sects' known from the heresiological literature of the early Church are usually named after founding figures or significant teachings, for example, the Carpocratians and Valentinians, and the Artotyritai, so-called for their bread and cheese Eucharists (Epiphanius *Pan.* 49.1.1). It need not be supposed that the heresiologists accurately reflected the self-definition of these groups, of course. Nevertheless, I am aware of no ready parallels for the suggestion that there were groups named after Martha and Mary.

Conversely, ἀπὸ Μαριάμμης and ἀπὸ Μάρθας need not indicate the name of the group—though the immediate parallel with Μαρκελλιανοὺς ἀπὸ Μαρκελλίνας implies it. For Ἀρποκρατιανοὺς ἀπὸ Σαλώμης suggests that ἀπό in this instance denotes the authority figure for the group, rather than their namesake. This would imply that Martha serves as the authority figure for a group, much as the Beloved Disciple functions as an authority figure for the community of the Fourth Gospel. McGuire suggests that the juxtaposition of female teachers may indicate that "Marcellina's followers claimed that she preserved teachings handed down from Salome, Mariamme, and Martha" (1999: 291 n. 22). In this case these three women appear in analogous position to the apostles. Just as certain traditions are associated with certain apostles (by attributing texts to them, for example), so Salome, Mariamme and Martha then appear as authority figures for the Carpocratians and Marcellina. Certainly the authority of Mary is evident in a number of early Christian texts, though the identity of this Mary is a matter of some dispute.[2]

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[2] Determining the identity of 'Mariamme' or 'Mary' in early Christian texts, particularly Gnostic texts, is a complex matter (Marjanen 1996; Jones 2002; Shoemaker 2001). While it has often been assumed that 'Mary' designates Mary Magdalene, or that a distinction between Mary of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene can be made on the basis of the form of the name (the latter being designated 'Mariamme'), neither of these assumptions hold true. Shoemaker in particular shows that the 'Gnostic Mary'

Salome, the mother of Jesus, and a 'sister of the youth whom Jesus loved' appear in another text associated with the Carpocratians, the 'Secret Gospel of Mark.'[3] In 'Secret Mark' only Salome is named. The mother of Jesus and the sister of the youth could match Mary (Mariamme) and Martha as they are known from other texts, since one of the fragments of 'Secret Mark' recounts a the raising of the young man on behalf of his sister in a narrative that has affinities with the raising of Lazarus. The explicit connection of Salome to the Carpocratians in both texts is all the more striking since the Carpocratians appear rarely in patristic writings (Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.25; Clement, *Strom.* 3 and this letter of Clement. Other patristic references are derived from these). Petersen (1999: 220–228) suggests an authoritative role for Salome among the Carpocratians based on Origen's comment and her appearance in 'Secret Mark,' though greater weight might be placed on the testimony of Origen, given the on-going dispute around the authenticity of 'Secret Mark' (Jakab 1999).

Bauckham takes Origen's comment as evidence "that there must have been substantial material about Salome—in the form of teaching given to her—which is now lost" (2002: 264), material which he suggests was produced by the Carpocratians. If McGuire is correct then Salome appears as authority figure alongside Mariamme and Martha and it need not be supposed that there are three separate bodies of material associated with each of the women. They might rather function as an authoritative group, analogous to the group of the Twelve. Such a possibility is suggested already by the Gospel of Luke, which identifies a group of women alongside the Twelve (Lk 8:1–3). Ricci (1994) has

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may well represent a conflation of Mary Magdalene and Mary of Nazareth. Suffice it to note here that it cannot be readily determined from either the name or the context whether the Mariamme in Origen's comment is Mary Magdalene or Mary the mother of Jesus or a conflation of these (or other) Marys.

[3] 'Secret Mark' was mentioned in passing earlier, in relation to source criticism of the Fourth Gospel. It is known from a (fragmentary) letter of Clement of Alexandria in which he warns the recipient about a falsification of the Gospel of Mark by the Carpocratians but also reveals that a 'more spiritual' version of Mark exists, from which he quotes (*NTA* 1.106–109; see further Smith 1973). Clement accepts this more spiritual version ('Secret Mark') but rejects the additions made to 'Secret Mark' by the Carpocratians. The manuscript of Clement's letter has disappeared, which is unfortunate because the authenticity of the letter is hotly debated (Smith 1982; Koester 1983; Criddle 1995; Jakab 1999; Petersen 1999). There are justifiable concerns about its authenticity. Nonetheless, 'Secret Mark' has been accepted as genuine by a number of scholars, and in some cases been considered part of the original Gospel, rather than a later expansion (Koester 1983; Crossan 1985).

argued persuasively that the two groups, ‘the Twelve’ and ‘the women,’ appear as a closely-matched pair in the text. Neither Salome nor Martha appear in Luke 8, however.

The combination of Salome, Mariamme and Martha is intriguing precisely because these three figures do not appear together in the New Testament. Salome appears with Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James in the Markan passion narrative (Mk 15:40; 16:1), while Martha appears with Mary (not the Magdalene, nor the mother of James) in Luke 10:38–42 and John 11:1–12:8. The group of these three women is thus not derived immediately from a canonical Gospel text. Conversely, Mary (Mariamne), Martha and Salome do appear together in a number of other texts, in particular some of the texts associated with Gnosticism and in a number of church orders.

9.2 Mary, Martha and Salome in gnostic literature

There are difficulties with defining Gnosticism and with categorising texts as ‘gnostic’ since it has become clear that these terms derive more from anti-heretical writers and/or modern interpreters than from the self-designation of ‘gnostic’ persons or groups (McGuire 1999: 258; see also Wilson 1984: 536; Petersen 1999: 21–22; King 2003: 5–19). It is not possible to enter the complexities of this field of scholarship here. I have retained the category because it provides a convenient way of grouping texts that are typically labeled ‘gnostic’ by scholars. Thus, for example, Silke Petersen (1999: 254–258) examines women disciples of Jesus in a number of ‘Christian-gnostic texts.’ Among these she includes *Pistis Sophia*, the *Manichean Psalmbook* and the *First Apocalypse of James*, all texts in which Martha appears. Consequently it is useful to examine these three texts together here. This is not to imply that the three texts are consistent in their perspective on women in general and on Martha in particular. For much as ‘Gnosticism’ embraces a wide variety of perspectives, so the attitude towards women can be expected to vary, in particular between more ascetic as opposed to more libertine gnostic groups (Goehring 1988; Hoffman 1995).

9.2.1 Pistis Sophia

Pistis Sophia, a gnostic text known from the Nag Hammadi library, speaks of a group of women disciples, of whom only Mariam (Mary Magdalene), Salome, Mary (the mother of Jesus) and Martha are named

(Schaberg 2002: 131).[4] These women actively participate in the dialogue with Jesus and are mediators of divine revelation. *Pistis Sophia* is not the title of a unified work, but rather a later designation for what are two separate works contained in the codex (Mohri 2000: 320). The first of these, the only one in which Martha appears, comprises books one to three and is dated to the second half of the third century (Brock 2002: 44). Scholarly consensus locates both parts of *Pistis Sophia* in Egypt (Marjanen 1996: 171).

Several things are noteworthy about this text. First, women appear as interpreters more frequently and more prominently than men. It is difficult to determine exactly how many women appear, given the appearance of at least two figures named Mary. Mary the mother of Jesus, Mariam (presumably Mary Magdalene), Salome and Martha certainly appear in the text. If the variation in the spelling of Maria and Mariam and the designation "the other Mary" in 1.62 intends to designate a third Mary (perhaps the "other Mary" of Mtt 28:1 or the sister of Martha), then the total number of women disciples who participate in the dialogue is five. Seven male disciples appear as interlocutors (Philip, Peter, John, Andrew, Thomas, Matthew and James). Among these Philip is singled out for special attention, both as the first male disciple to speak and as the one who writes the revelation (1.22; 1.43). Also significant is that 'Maria/Mariam' appears first and extensively and that a conflict ensues between Peter and this Mary (1.36, 1.72; on this conflict see Brock 1999; 2003). Martha appears three times as interpreter (1.38–39; 1.57; 2.80). Apart from Mariam/Mary, no disciple, male or female, speaks more than three times.

The dialogue is typically framed either with a request on the part of the disciple to be commanded to speak, or with an invitation of the Saviour to come and offer the interpretation. In the case of Martha this invitation appears in the form: "Let the one in whom the Spirit of perception has arisen, come forward and speak with understanding of the repentance which the Pistis Sophia said" (1.38). Since Martha responds to this invitation, she is marked as having "the Spirit of perception." Martha prostrates herself, kisses his feet, weeps and cries aloud in humility. For this she is blessed by Jesus, for, says he, “blessed is every man who humbles himself, for to him will mercy be given” (ibid.).

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[4] The text is known from only one manuscript that derives from fourth-century Egypt (Mohri 2000: 319; Pearson 2004: 74; critical edition and description of the manuscript in Schmidt and MacDermot 1978: xii–xiv). All translations of the text are taken from Schmidt and MacDermot (1978).

Martha receives a more extensive introduction than some of the other characters, rendering her a more individual character than, for example, Andrew (1.45; 1.56; 1.74) or Salome (1.54; 1.58). The motifs of humility, falling at the feet, and weeping are not associated with Martha in canonical texts. Petersen suggests that here, as elsewhere, *Pistis Sophia* includes New Testament traditions in modified form and supposes (1999: 256) that the decisive impetus for Martha as “particularly humble woman” was her role as “serving one” (Lk 10:40; Jn 12:2). Prostration occurs regularly in *Pistis Sophia* and expresses the recognition of Jesus as revealer (see Mohri 2000: 334–336). As such it might not be connected to any Gospel narratives. If Martha’s prostration is not merely the appropriate response to the revealer but also reflects Gospel narratives, then the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore of the Matthean Easter narrative seems the most likely source.

In her final appearance Martha is described as “sober in spirit” (2.80). ‘Soberness of spirit’ is cited several times in *Pistis Sophia* as a requirement for interpreting the words of Pistis Sophia (1.46; 1.49; 1.52; 1.79). Besides Martha, Thomas, Matthew and James are noted as disciples ‘sober in spirit.’ The appearance of Thomas and Matthew in this connection may be significant, since Thomas and Matthew are singled out among the disciples, along with Philip, as

> the three to whom it has been given, through the First Mystery, to write every word of the Kingdom of the Light, and to bear witness to them. (1.43)

In *Pistis Sophia* Martha thus appears as one of a number of women disciples, including Mary (or Mariam) and Salome. She takes a full and equal stand among the male disciples in interpreting the words of Pistis Sophia and attention is drawn to distinguishing characteristics: her humility and her soberness of Spirit. The same three women, Mariam, Martha and Salome also appear together in the *Manichean Psalmbook*.

9.2.2 *The* Manichean Psalmbook

The *Manichean Psalmbook* is a collection of nearly three hundred psalms deriving from the early period of the formation of the Manichean church (Schäferdiek 1992: 91). Allberry, who first published the second part of the *Psalmbook*, considers it to have been written about 340 CE (1938: xx). Säve-Söderberg is

> convinced that the original version of the Psalms of Thomas was composed by Mani's disciple and should consequently be dated to the last quarter of the 3rd century. (1949: 156)

Heracleides, to whom some of the psalms are attributed, was also a disciple of Mani (Coyle 2005: 198; a new edition of these psalms has been published by Richter 1998). The *Psalmbook* is preserved in a fourth-century Coptic codex (description of the manuscript in Allberry 1938: ix–xviii).

One of the psalms of Heracleides opens with the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. It enumerates the twelve male apostles in a version that appears to be derived from Matthew 10:2–4, not only in following the order of Matthew closely, but in designating Matthew 'the tax gatherer' and placing him as 'a good end' at the end of the list. (Thaddaeus is omitted, however, and instead Paul is added after Matthew.) These twelve male apostles are followed by a list of eleven women: Mariam, Martha, Salome, Arsenoe, Thecla, Maximilla, Iphidama, Aristobula, Eubula, Drusiane, and Mygdonia (on these lists see Richter 1994: 193–219).[5] In each case the apostle is described with a key attribute. For example, "a merchant that finds gain is Thomas in the land…of India…" (192.15–16), "a despiser…of the body…is Thecla, the lover of God" (192.25).[6] In the case of Martha, the text reads,

> A net-caster is Mariam, hunting for the eleven others
> that were wandering. .... There were.
> A joyous servant is Martha her sister also.
> Obedient sheep are Salome and Arsenoe
> (192.21–24).

The hymn ends with a charge to the gathered community to "put oil in our lamps" and to "not slumber and sleep," waiting to enter the bridal chamber with the Lord (193.5, 8). This frame around the enumeration of the apostles likens them to the wise virgins and sets them as an example for the community who are encouraged to be wise like them.

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[5] The reason for the disparity between the twelve men and the eleven women listed might serve a stylistic purpose, since Mani is also included in the list, following the women. Allberry notes that each psalm "is divided into verses containing an equal number of lines" (1938: xx).

[6] All translations of the text are taken from Allberry (1938).

Mariam, Martha and Salome are the only names in the list that correspond to women known from canonical texts. With the exception of Arsenoe, the other women derive from the early apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, which were known to the Manicheans (Schäferdiek 1992). The description of Mariam as net-caster hunting for the eleven others identifies her with Mariam of the Johannine Easter narrative who appears in another psalm of Heracleides, since this Mariam is likewise sent to "be a messenger... to these wandering orphans... [to] make haste... and go unto the Eleven" (187.12–13; so also Coyle 1991: 49–50). Arsenoe appears only in the Manichean Psalms and in the *First Apocalypse of James* (see 9.2.3 below). It appears that she too is associated with the ministry of Jesus, not only because she consistently appears with Mariam, Martha and Salome, but also because a fragment of a Manichean text found at Turfan (M 18) which contains a resurrection narrative names her among the women at the tomb (Bauckham 1991: 258–259; Petersen 1999: 258–259). While this fragment does not name Martha among the women at the tomb (Coyle 2005: 200), Richter (1994: 211) suggests that the agreement of the other three names points to a common source of the two lists.

Martha appears again in the next psalm in the Manichean Psalmbook. This psalm begins with a praise of "the Son of the living God, the physician of souls... the savior... of Spirits" (193.13–14). After describing the eternal nature of God, the psalm turns to the incarnation and the choosing of the disciples:

> God became man(?), he went about in all the world.
> He received a man's likeness, a slave's vesture (σχῆμα).
> He chose his disciples (μαθητής), the beginning of his fold.
> He traversed Judea, looking for stones daily.
> he went to the shores of the sea (θάλασσα), seeking pearls
> (μαργαρίτης). (194.2–6)

Again eleven male apostles are enumerated, and again this list is followed by a list of women:

> He chose Mariam, the spirit of wisdom
> He gave life to Martha, the breath of discretion
> He summoned Salome, the grace of peace.
> He called Arsenoe, he set her in the garland of Truth. (194.19–22)

Richter (1994: 213) observes that the power of the Saviour is here expressed in his ability to give life to Martha and that the ability to judge (διάκρισις, here translated as 'discretion') is necessary for recognising (and discerning between) light and darkness.

This psalm makes it quite clear that these four women are called, just as the men are: for immediately following their naming it is said, "he despoiled Jerusalem, he took her pearls (μαργαρίτης)" (194.24). Μαργαρίτης thus forms as an inclusio that brackets all of the disciples gathered by the Saviour 'seeking pearls' (194.6). As in the previous psalm, there is no marker within the text that differentiates the women from the men.

The psalm continues to describe the activities of the Saviour (reviving the dead, opening eyes and ears, sowing seeds) and the response of those who heard his voice:

> They that glory in their beauty gladly let it decay.
> They] took up the cross (σταυρός) upon them, they went from village to village.
> They] went into the roads hungry, with no bread in their hands.
> They walked in the heat (καῦμα) thirsting, they took no water to drink.
> No gold, no silver, no money, did they take with them on their way.
> They went into the villages, not knowing anybody.
> They were welcomed for his sake, they were loved for his name's sake.
> Some hated them and cast them out because of him.
> They prayed for their enemies, they blessed them that curse them.
> They were struck in the face, they turned their other cheek.
> They were delivered to the courts, they laughed at the judges (κριτής).
> They were condemned to death, they bore it rejoicing.
> They were exposed to hunger and thirst, they lived on his word.
> They were stripped of their bodies (σῶμα), they set his light upon them.
> They were made to go up on the fire, he made them cool with his dews.
> They were hanged to the cross (σταυρός), he took them to Paradise (παράδεισος) (195.7–22).

The description alludes to canonical descriptions of the sending of the disciples (Mtt 10:9) but also evokes narratives known from the apocryphal Acts. Having described the mission of the apostles, the psalm moves seamlessly into a description of the passion of Jesus and his rescue of the prisoners of death and concludes in praise and a prayer for mercy and enlightenment. The martyrdom of Jesus thereby becomes a model for the martyrdom of the disciples, who themselves are models for the community (Richter 1994:194).

Since Mariam, Martha, Salome and Arsenoe have been included among the disciples called by the Saviour, they are also included among those who "went from village to village" and who suffered for their faith. That the women are not to be excluded is clear from another psalm which follows the same pattern of describing the suffering of Jesus (142.10–16) before describing the suffering of "all the apostles" (142.17). After describing the martyrdom of Peter, Andrew, John, James, Thomas and Paul (142.18–143.3), the psalm describes the martyrdoms of Thecla, Drusiane, Maximilla and Aristobula (143.4–14), concluding that "all the godly [that] there have been, male, female,—all have suffered" (143.15). How this literary depiction reflects or shaped historical reality for Manichean women is another question. Brown thinks that "Manichean women travelled on long missionary journeys with their male peers" (1988: 202). Coyle, conversely, claims that women members of the 'Elect' in Manichaeism remained settled and that "no evidence has yet emerged that women exercised 'special' ministries carried out by the Elect, such as preacher, lector, scribe, or cantor" (2001: 82–83). He also stresses both the longevity and geographic spread of Manichaeism which suggests diversity of practice and attitudes towards women.[7]

The *Manichean Psalmbook* presents Martha as one of a number of women disciples who serve as witnesses and role-models for the community.[8] She is described as a 'joyous servant' and 'breath of discretion.' Since Mariam, Martha, Salome and Arsenoe appear consistently in this order, it also possible that they constitute a set list of women apostles (so also Richter 1994: 214).

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[7] McBride, for example, observes that the *Psalmbook* is unusual among Manichean writings in including historical women in the liturgy such as Mary and Theona, "that these women occupied a position of great importance in the Manichean church in Egypt," and that this

> stands in marked contrast with Manichaeism outside of Egypt which, while certainly affording women the roles of Elect teachers and missionisers, did not go so far as venerating historical women in their liturgy. (1988: 91).

Colin (2002) demonstrates the participation of women in priestly functions in indigenous religions in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. The status of women in Egyptian Manichaeism might thus be a reflection of its cultural context. On the Manichean community see also Boyce (1975).

[8] Martha also appears in the Tebessa Codex (Col. 8; BeDuhn and Harrison 1997: 43), though she remains nameless, and the Cologne Mani codex (92.14–93.2; Cameron and Dewey 1979: 74–75) in which Mani cites the Lukan narrative concerning Martha and Mary as justification for his dietary laws. In both cases the contrast between Martha and Mary is used typologically for the two orders of the Manichean church, the auditors and the elect (BeDuhn and Harrison 1997: 69–70).

9.2.3 First Apocalypse of James

The *First Apocalypse of James* (*1 Apoc. Jas.*), a Coptic text from Nag Hammadi that appears to derive from Syria in the late second or early third century and "shows some possible Valentinian influence" (Pearson 2004: 71; so also Hartenstein 2000: 198; Marjanen 1996: 126–127),[9] identifies a group of "seven women who have [become] your disciples" (38.16–17; *NTA* 1.324). Petersen (1999: 243) suggests that this group of the seven women forms a set number, like the set group of twelve apostles (so also Hartenstein 2000: 61; Mohri 2000: 295–297) on the basis of *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (*SJC*) where a group of seven women is listed alongside the twelve as the group to whom the risen Saviour appears (compare Mtt 28:16–20). It has already been observed that a group of eleven women appears in the *Manichean Psalmbook*. *SJC* names only one woman, Mary. *1Apoc. Jas.* names four of the women. The text is corrupt, so that only three names are legible: "When you speak the words of this perception, persuade these [four (?)]: Salome, Mary [Martha (?)] and Arsinoe…" (40.22–26).[10] The fourth name, Martha, has been reconstructed in the text on the basis of the two psalms in the *Manichean Psalmbook* discussed above.

Since the text breaks off at this point it is unclear whether *1 Apoc. Jas.* listed other women after these four (Marjanen 1996: 129–131). Petersen (1999: 249–250) thinks it is unlikely that only four women are intended here, given the larger group of seven named earlier in the apocalypse, and claims that remnants of a further woman's name appear on page 42 of the manuscript. Hence she considers it unlikely that these four women formed a set group of four alongside the group of seven. Significantly the figure four is reconstructed in the text, again on the basis of the *Manichean Psalmbook*. This reconstruction is rather less plausible, however, than the reconstruction of the name Martha. Marjanen (1996: 130–131, 133) argues that the lacuna cannot have contained a number, but nevertheless thinks it probable that the list of names in *1 Apoc. Jas.* is identical to the lists in the *Manichean Psalmbook*. He furthermore suggests that the four named women are part of the group of seven women in 38.16–23. These women are said to "have become strong through a perception that is within them" (38.22–23).

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[9] The text is preserved in two manuscripts, though only one of these is currently available (description of the manuscripts in Funk 1991: 314). Funk presumes that the extant Coptic is a translation from the Greek.

[10] Both Petersen (1999: 249) and Marjanen (1996: 129–131) observe that the text is even more corrupt: at the end of line 26 merely ⲓⲛⲟⲏ is visible, hence the beginning of the name 'Arsinoe' must also be supplied.

> It cannot be mere coincidence that the seven are described as women of *perception* and that James is urged to seek advice of the four women when he speaks the words of *perception* (40,23–24). In light of this terminological connection, it seems probable that all seven female disciples of the Lord are spiritually equipped in a special way but Salome, Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Arsinoe are introduced as the prime examples of the group, as women from whom even James can learn. (Marjanen 1996: 136)

The notion of the women as mediators of divine revelation may also be present in this text. Marjanen suggests ⲧⲱⲧ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ, which is usually translated as a transitive verb ('comfort, encourage, convince') "has exclusively an intransitive meaning" and that the "most plausible meaning of ⲧⲱⲧ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ ⲛ̄ is therefore 'to be persuaded/convinced by' or 'to be satisfied with'" (1996: 133). Moreover, since it has been argued that the lacuna cannot have contained the number four (because the demonstrative article at the end of the previous line is masculine not feminine), he proposes an alternative restoration:

> ⲧⲱⲧ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲉⲓ[ϣⲁϫⲉ ⲛ̄]ⲥ̅ⲁ̅ⲗ̅ⲱ̅ⲙ̅ⲏ̅ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲙ̅ⲁ̅ⲣ̅ⲓ̅ⲁ̅ⲙ̅ (...be persuaded by the word of Salome and Mariam...) or ⲧⲱⲧ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲉⲓ[ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲉ] ⲥ̅ⲁ̅ⲗ̅ⲱ̅ⲙ̅ⲏ̅ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲙ̅ⲁ̅ⲣ̅ⲓ̅ⲁ̅ⲙ̅ (...be persuaded by this testimony: Salome and Mariam...). (1996: 134)

Considering the second possibility more likely, he translates: "when you speak these words of this [perception/knowledge], be persuaded by this [testimony/word of] Salome and Mary [and Martha and Ars]inoe..." (1996: 133). This interpretation of the text focuses not on James as one called to encourage the women, but rather invites him to learn from them.

Marjanen also observes that James is only expected to speak three times: to answer the three toll collectors during his ascent (33.5–11); to communicate the revelation to Addai (36.15–16); and to rebuke the twelve (42.20–24). The special perception/knowledge ('gnosis') which James is to speak could refer to any of these events. Salome, Mary and the other women are identified as "spiritual authorities who could provide guidance to James in the most important tasks the Lord entrusts to him" (Marjanen 1996: 135). Notably, Hippolytus records that the Naassenes derived their teachings from James through Mary Magdalene

(*Ref. Haer.* 5.7.1). Marjanen's interpretation is endorsed by Schaberg (2002: 131), while Petersen (1999: 250–251) considers it more likely that the women are intended as role-models for James. Whether as role models or as spiritual authorities, *1 Apoc. Jas.* accords a significant place to the women.

9.3 Martha as an authority figure in church orders

Pistis Sophia and the *Manichean Psalmbook* suggest that Martha was recognised as a key female disciple and mediator of divine knowledge in some circles. Yet it is not only in gnostic texts that Martha appears in such a role. She also appears in lists of women disciples in three church orders: the Ethiopic *Didascalia Apostolorum*, the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Testamentum Domini*. The issues associated with the interpretation of church orders have already been noted (see 8.1).

9.3.1 *The* Didascalia Apostolorum *and* Apostolic Constitutions

The *Didascalia Apostolorum* is a third-century church order originally composed in Greek, but now extant in its complete form only in Syriac translation (Connolly 1929; Vööbus 1979; Steimer 1992: 49–52). There are also Arabic and Ethiopic versions, which are dependent on the revision of the *Didascalia* by the *Apostolic Constitutions* (so Steimer 1992: 50). It contains two lists of women disciples: "Mary Magdalene and Mary the daughter of James and the other Mary" (chap. 15; Vööbus 1979: 2.145) and "Mary Magdalene and Mary the daughter of James and mother of Jose, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee" (chap. 16; Vööbus 1979: 2.157–158). A Greek fragment lists Salome in place of "the other Mary" in the first list. More interesting is a variant in the Ethiopic version which reads,

> But teach them rather the words of the Law, and the prophets who prophesied of the coming of Christ. For our Master Jesus Christ sent us the Twelve to teach all nations; but He commanded not women to teach, nor to speak in the Church to the people. But let them rather receive admonition and (keep) from deeds of fornication, and be obedient in fasting and prayer and in hearing the words of the Scriptures. For there abode with us Mary Magdalene, and the sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, and Salome, and others also with them: (and) since He commanded not them to teach along with us, neither is it right for other women to teach. (Harden 1920: 88)

Similarly, the *Apostolic Constitutions* (*CA*)—a collection of church orders of the late fourth century deriving from Syria, whose first six books are an interpolated version of the *Didascalia* (Steimer 1992: 120–122; Cardman 1999: 314; critical edition in Metzger 1985)—expands the list of women disciples to

> the mother of our Lord and his sisters; also Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Martha and Mary the sisters of Lazarus, and Salome. (*CA* 3.6.2; Bauckham 2002: 265)

The *Didascalia* reveals a particular concern with the activities of widows (see Methuen 1995, 1999; Cardman 1999; Penn 2001). The notice that Jesus did not send out his women disciples appears in a chapter devoted specifically to the widows. The list of the women disciples is used to argue against the role of women as teachers in the church: if women were to teach, they would have been sent by Jesus. Such "arguments from inaction or lack of intention are curiously effective," observes Cardman, "since they can neither be proven nor refuted. Jesus' presumed intentions thus weigh heavily against the widows" (1999: 312).

Yet the presence of women disciples in the entourage of Jesus can also be interpreted differently, as demonstrated by the Manichean exegesis outlined earlier. The need to stress that the women disciples of Jesus were *not* sent might well serve to counteract precisely the kind of interpretation offered by the Manicheans, who included the women among the apostles without apparent distinction. If this is so, it might also explain the curious change of names in the Ethiopic version of the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. For in both cases the changes include both Martha and Salome and consequently align the list of names more closely with the triad 'Mary, Martha and Salome' that has already been observed in Origen's quote from Celsus and in the gnostic literature. Indeed, precisely this group of three appear together also in the *Testamentum Domini.*

9.3.2 *The* Testamentum Domini

The *Testamentum Domini* (*TD*) is usually dated to the fifth, or possibly late fourth century and assigned to Syria, or occasionally Egypt or Asia Minor (Steimer 1992: 100–101; see also the detailed introduction in Cooper and Maclean 1902: 3–45). It was written in Greek but exists only in a Syriac translation dating to 687 CE (Rahmani 1968: xiv; English translation in Cooper and Maclean 1902) and in an even later Ethiopic version (Beylot 1984).[11] There is also an Arabic version, which has not yet appeared in a complete text-critical edition, and there appears to have been a Coptic version, the latter no longer extant (Steimer 1992: 97). The *TD* forms the first two books of the Syriac *Clementine Octateuch* (Nau 1967) and of the West Syrian *Synodicon* (Vööbus 1975–76). The latter is based on the earliest extant manuscript of the *TD* (Steimer 1992: 96) and as such might offer better readings than the edition of Rahmani (so Bradshaw 2002a: 86–87). For this reason translations here are taken from Vööbus. For ease of cross-reference the division of the text according to Rahmani is maintained.

The *TD* opens with a narrative frame that contains an apocalypse and that sets the church order within a discourse of the risen Lord with the disciples. This narrative frame includes Martha, Mary and Salome as a group of three women disciples alongside the Twelve. The Twelve ask for instruction "as to what is right in administering the mysteries of the church" (1.15). Before Jesus responds, Martha, Mary and Salome add their voices also.

> Then Martha, Mary, and Salome, those who were with us, answered and said: 'Yea, O our Lord, teach us how we shall know what is right to do so that our souls may live unto Thee.' Then Jesus answered and said unto them: 'I desire that, as you persevere in supplication, that you should always serve my Gospel and become examples in holiness for the redemption of those who trust in me; and that in all things you will be figures of the kingdom of heaven.' (1.16)

What significance is to be attached to this inclusion of Martha, Mary and Salome? Anne Jensen observes their presence, but concludes that they are nevertheless not integrated into the decision-making 'we' of the apostles ("in das 'wir' der Beschlüsse fassenden Apostel sind sie allerdings nicht integriert"; 1992: 159). This is true insofar as the text continues, "But to us also Jesus said…," which implies that the response of Jesus to the request from the women is addressed to the women solely and that the women are distinct from the authorial 'we.' It fails to notice the significant place that the women hold nonetheless.

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[11] A portion of the *TD* has also been published by Arendzen (1901b) from a different Syriac manuscript; though this manuscript only contains the apocalypse that opens the *TD* and as such does not contain the reference to the women which is of interest here.

Harnack further reads this reference to the women as a digression in the text whose intent is to limit the role of women in the congregations to prayer and setting a holy example—"sie sollen beten und ein heiliges Beispiel geben—sonst nichts" (Harnack 1899: 889–890; in Steimer 1992: 102 n. 70). Such a role would be consistent with the interpretation of the *Didascalia* noted above and would suggest that in this community, as in the community addressed by the *Didascalia*, women are claiming roles and responsibilities from which the author seeks to remove them. Harnack's reading is not supported by the text, however.

First, it is notable that the *TD* never specifies who the apostles are. It is simply 'to us' that the Lord appears and it is "Peter, John, Thomas, Matthew, Andrew and Matthias and the rest" who ask for instruction (1.15). Since the term 'apostle' is synonymous neither with 'male' nor with the Twelve (Junia in Rom 16:7 as a case in point), to distinguish 'apostles' and 'women' as Jensen (1992: 159) and Steimer (1992: 102) do draws a linguistic distinction that the text of the *TD* itself does not draw explicitly. It seems plausible that the group of men and the group of women are distinct and that the women do not have an identical status to the men. Yet the precise relationship of the women to the men needs to be determined from within the text. In this regard it might be significant that Martha, Mary and Salome are described as "figures of the kingdom of heaven" (1.16), a phrase which recalls the opening address of Jesus to "you who have been made disciples unto the kingdom of heaven" (1.1). Are 'figures of the kingdom of heaven' categorically different to 'disciples of the kingdom of heaven'? Should one speak of 'apostles' and 'women' or rather of 'male apostles' and 'female apostles'? The role and relation of these women to the men still needs to be clarified; yet the gulf between them might be much smaller than Jensen and Steimer imply by their terminology.

Second, Harnack's claim that the women are to pray and provide a holy example and nothing more is incorrect. For Harnack has omitted a key phrase used in the text: the women are explicitly *not* merely to pray and be figures of the kingdom of heaven, but are instructed to "always serve my Gospel." In what does such service consist? Here it is relevant that the *TD* is unusual among church orders in explicitly including women among its leadership. Indicative of this inclusion of women is the significant place and status which widows hold in this order (Osiek 1983; Faivre 1977: 107). From his extensive survey of the widows in early Christianity, Krause concludes,

> keine andere Quelle weist den kirchlichen Witwen einen so weiten Kompetenzbereich zu wie das Testamentum Domini Nostri. Die Witwen scheinen in der Hierarchie sogar über den niederen männlichen Klerikern zu stehen. (1995: 61)[12]

This is all the more surprising given the power-struggles and decline of the order of widows evident in other documents such as the *Didascalia Apostolorum* and *Apostolic Constitutions* (Methuen 1995; Penn 2001).

Given the increased role for widows within the *TD*, a corresponding model among the women disciples of Jesus in the narrative framework seems hardly surprising (see Bauckham 2002: 264; who takes the women as examples for the widows, presbyters, deaconesses and virgins mentioned later in the *TD*). Whereas the list of women disciples is used in the *Didascalia* and *Apostolic Constitutions* specifically to bolster the case that women were *not* sent to teach, hence to curb the authority of women, the *TD* includes the women in strikingly different manner, setting them up as a parallel authoritative group alongside the male apostles. This is also the conclusion of Cooper and Maclean, who propose that "the chapter seems to be inserted in order to emphasise the teaching that women are among 'those who minister' in the Church (I.15)" (1902: 148).

Thus, while Jensen reads Martha, Mary and Salome as present, but nevertheless excluded from 'the decision making "we" of the apostles,' it is also possible to read the text as an explicit inclusion of the women, on the basis that the *TD* nowhere implies that 'being with' involves only presence but not participation in decision-making. Or rather, to focus merely on the absence of the women in 'the decision-making "we"' is to miss the significant role which the women play in the community. For it is also striking that the *TD* explicitly names "such as these women" alongside "such as these men" as members of the community:

> But it shall be spoken and given to those who are firm and fixed, and do not fall away, who keep My commandments and this tradition, [to the end] that they, keeping these [things], may abide holy and upright and strong in Me…for verily I say unto you, that such as these [men] and

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[12] "No other source allocates the ecclesiastical widows such a wide scope of competence as the *Testamentum Domini*. The widows appear to rank even above the lower male clerics in the hierarchy." The widows are named immediately after the bishop and before the presbyters and deacons (1.19) and are called "those that sit in front" (1.19; see also 1.40–43; 2.4, 9). The *TD* also includes "presbyteresses" (1.35; 2.19).

> such as these [women] shall, after death, dwell in the third order of My Father who has sent me. (1.18)

It is to 'such as these men and such as these women' that Martha, Mary and Salome are to be "examples in holiness for the redemption of those who trust in me; and...figures of the kingdom of heaven" (1.16). The *Testamentum Domini* thus creates a narrative framework in which men and women from the time of Jesus appear as models and mediators of the divine order for the men and women in the church (and specifically among the church leadership) addressed by the text.

How such a model was received and what impact it had is difficult to know. There is one indicator that could point in the direction of the kind of reading of Martha that I have proposed here. The only certain external reference to the *TD* derives from Severus of Antioch (bishop from 512–518 CE) who mentions the *Testament* by name in one of his letters (Brooks 1969: 2.426; Steimer 1992: 99–100). Also from Antioch, though possibly a little earlier (second half of the fifth century), is the homily of Ps.Eustathius which names Martha a 'second Peter' and sets her with Peter and John the Evangelist as key bearer of the apostolic tradition (see 2.5.4). The remarkable status accorded to Martha in this homily is consistent with her appearance in the *TD* as first woman disciple. While the basis for the homily is the text of John 11, if the *TD* is known to the preacher, then it is possible that this text likewise influenced her interpretation in Ps.Eustathius.

9.4 THE *ACTS OF PILATE (GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS)*

One final text is noted here in passing. The *Acts of Pilate* (*Gospel of Nicodemus*) includes Martha, Mary Magdalene and Salome as a group of women accompanying the mother of Jesus to the cross (*Acts of Pilate* 10). This text appears only in the second Greek version, a redaction of the *Acts of Pilate* which postdates the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE (so Scheidweiler 1991: 503). Martha, Mary Magdalene and Salome appear as a group; however in this instance they have become a group gathered not around Jesus, but around Mary Theotokos:

> And she [the Theotokos] rose up as if blinded, and goes along the road weeping. And women followed her—Martha, and Mary Magdalene, and Salome, and other virgins. And John also was with her. When, therefore, they came to the multitude of the crowd, the mother of God says to John: Where is my son? John says: Seest thou Him bearing the crown of

> thorns, and having His hands bound? And the mother of God, hearing this, and seeing Him, fainted, and fell backwards to the ground, and lay a considerable time. And the women, as many as followed her, stood round her, and wept. (*ANF* 8.430)

The order of names matches the *Testamentum*, though the *TD* does not specify Mary as the Magdalene. It is worth observing that Martha is listed in first place and that here, as elsewhere, the list reflects lists of women disciples known from the wider tradition rather than any list drawn immediately from the canonical passion narratives.

9.5 Conclusions

I began with a comment from Celsus who suggested that there was a group (or groups) named after Martha, but whose existence was disputed by Origen. The subsequent hunt for other references in which Martha appears as an authority revealed a number of texts which list Martha as a key disciple in the entourage of Jesus. She appears alongside Mariamme, Salome and Arsinoe as revealer of divine insights in *Pistis Sophia* and the *Manichean Psalmbook* and probably also in the *1Apoc. Jas*. She also appears in lists of women disciples in several church orders. This appearance is striking because these documents, with their intent of curbing unorthodox practices, rely heavily on canonical texts. Yet precisely in the canonical Gospels Martha does not appear in lists of women disciples, neither in the listing of the women who travel with Jesus in Luke 8:1–3, nor among the women disciples who appear at the cross and tomb. Bauckham observes that these lists of women disciples in the church orders may have a traditional character and degree of independence of the canonical Gospels (2002: 265). This suggestion is borne out here.

What then of Origen's comment and the claim of Celsus that there are ἄλλους ἀπὸ Μάρθας? In view of the appearance of Martha, Mariamme and Salome in so many lists of women disciples, McGuire's suggestion that "Marcellina's followers claimed that she preserved teachings handed down from Salome, Mariamme, and Martha" (1999: 291 n. 22) seems increasingly plausible. In that case Origen may well search in vain for a group named after Martha, for she serves not as their namesake but as their apostolic authority—and the latter not on her own but in the company of other women, and most likely also of the male disciples.

This, in turn, is entirely consistent with the argument proposed in relation to the *Apostolic Church Order*. This text is by no means unusual in assigning Martha a place of apostolic authority. Nor is it unusual among church orders in using apostolic women to argue about the role of women in the church. It is merely unusual in the amount of space it devotes to this matter and in focusing explicitly on the Eucharist. The appearance of Martha in this context matches her connection to διακονία and her status as a key disciple of Jesus in other texts.

CHAPTER TEN

GATHERING THE STRANDS

This study began with the observation that research on Martha has, in the main, been limited to considering only the canonical references or observing her only *en route* to other concerns, such as the analysis of Mary Magdalene or the analysis of women in gnostic literature. It was argued that these limits have led to a skewed interpretation and that an analysis of the material with a primary focus on Martha would offer new insights.

10.1 *Apostola apostolorum*

One very significant tradition which has been recovered as a result is the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore and apostle of the resurrection. None of the canonical texts include Martha among the women who go to the tomb of Jesus on Easter Sunday morning. Yet a number of early Christian texts and images do. The earliest of these is the *Epistula Apostolorum*, a text whose early- to mid-second-century dating (so Stewart-Sykes, 1997; Hill, 1999) places it close the later New Testament writings. Hornschuh (1965) had argued that this text knows a non-canonical passion narrative which it considers authoritative. I have proposed that the naming of Martha among the myrrhophores likewise derives from such non-canonical tradition, since this provides the most convincing reason for her inclusion. This in turn suggests that the tradition of Martha among the women at the tomb might be as ancient as some of the traditions known from the New Testament. Since the four canonical Gospels differ both in the number and the names of the myrrhophores, it is hardly inconceivable that there were further versions circulating, or that one or more such versions should name Martha among the women. The *Epistula*'s affinities with Johannine tradition further raise the possibility that this version of the Easter narrative derives from Johannine circles and perhaps was known to the author of the fourth Gospel.

The appearance of Martha at the tomb is surprisingly pervasive and persistent. Besides the *Epistula Apostolorum*, this tradition appears in Hippolytus' *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, in early Christian hymns (the Greek Easter hymn and an Ethiopic hymn noted in connection to Abyssinian art), a sermon of Severian of Gabala, as well as several other liturgical texts (the Ambrosian Missal and Syrian Catholic Fenqitho, to which might also be added the Synaxarion of Constantinople), and in a number of images (at least seven specifying Martha among the myrrhophores). These texts and images derive from Palestine, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and Ethiopia from the second to the sixth century and beyond. There are a number of striking features of these texts.

First, Martha is not added to the canonical women at the tomb. Rather, Martha typically replaces the canonical women. In most cases, the women at the tomb are only named Martha and Mary. This is the case in the *Commentary on the Song*, the sermon of Severian, the hymns, the Syrian Catholic Fenqitho, the Ambrosian Missal, one of the traditions preserved in the Synaxarion, and the images placing Martha a the tomb. Only rarely does Martha appear in a larger group at the tomb—in the *Epistula Apostolorum* (with Mary Magdalene and 'Mary, the one belonging to Martha'), and in a group of eight myrrhophores in the *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle*.

Martha is typically named first. She goes as first apostle of the resurrection in the *Epistula Apostolorum*, she is consistently named first in the Hippolytan commentary, as well as in the Syrian Catholic Fenqitho, the Greek Easter hymn, and the sermon of Severian. Conversely the Ambrosian Missal, Ethiopic hymn, Synaxarion, and the image in *Syr.33* name Mary first. (Order is difficult to determine in the other images, since it is not clear whether any sense of 'order' can be assigned to the women standing on either side of the tomb. Similarly the order of the names on the Egyptian amulet is ambiguous: the name Mary appears first, but the name Martha appears closer to the leading woman.) Insofar as any ordering can be determined, the evidence thus suggests that Martha takes the leading role more often and in the earliest and most extensive extant witnesses to this tradition. This needs to be taken seriously, particularly in the case of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. It is Martha who plays the leading role in the *Commentary* and it is Martha and Mary who are named 'apostles to the apostles.' One might argue about the identity of Mary, but the role of Martha ought not be ignored or subordinated in the process, purely on the assumed primacy of Mary (Magdalene). Martha is not a minor *apostola apostolorum*, nor is her role secondary or derived from that of Mary Magdalene.

Second, it is striking how many of the texts and images are closely connected to a liturgical context. It was observed that the Hippolytan commentary probably originated as a sermon preached at Easter. Both the Ambrosian Missal and the Syrian Catholic Fenqitho include Martha in the celebrations of Easter week. The hymn which includes Martha at the tomb likewise is part of a collection of hymns for Easter. I have argued that precisely this liturgical context of the celebrations of Easter also serves to explain the pervasive appearance of Martha in early Christian iconography of the myrrhophores. For while it has been regularly observed that the images on the pilgrim ampullae reflect the architecture of the Holy Sepulchre, these images also reflect the liturgy that the pilgrims encountered in the Holy City. The *typikon* of the church of Jerusalem reveals that these celebrations came to include two myrrhophores carrying censers who enacted the Easter drama of the women going to the tomb, matching the iconography which depicts the women carrying censers. Since the iconography of the myrrhophores consistently names the two women Martha and Mary, both on pilgrim ampullae and in manuscript illuminations, it seems probable that these myrrhophores from the Jerusalem liturgy were known as Martha and Mary. The Gospel of Matthew—the Gospel of choice in Jerusalem—forms the basis for this tradition which here appears as an exegesis of Matthew 28:1. This is consistent with the Easter hymn analysed in chapter 5, in which the inclusion of Martha was also shown to be an interpretation of Matthew.

A third feature of the tradition of Martha as myrrhophore is that in several instances this post-canonical tradition offers the women a more significant place—and more significant voice—than the canonical traditions do. The commentary of Hippolytus, in its interweaving of the Song of Songs with the Easter narrative, allows the women to tell their own story in the first person, unlike any of the canonical versions. Similarly the Easter hymn proclaims the Easter message directly from the women at the tomb to the congregation, without any mediation by the male apostles, and presents a much greater role for the women as recipients and mediators of the Easter kerygma than any of the canonical Gospels.

10.2 ATTENDING TO LITURGY AND ICONOGRAPHY

Liturgy and iconography have proven highly significant for this study of Martha traditions, particularly in relation to the traditions placing her at the tomb of Jesus. One of the limitations of research on early Christian women to which scholars have drawn attention is its concentration on literary representations; its focus not on women, but rather on "what men thought about women" (Brooten 1985: 65). The inclusion of liturgy and iconography offers a useful corrective since it attends to contexts in which the majority of early Christians encountered the narratives, traditions and theology. To simply compare sermons, hymns, prayers and images to the canonical texts and dismiss them as 'mistaken' on the basis of their divergence from these texts is to miss this point entirely.

> Der Prozeß gegenseitiger Durchdringung von Bibel und Liturgie ist auch mit der Kanonbildung noch nicht abgeschlossen, insofern die Schrift durch die Liturgie ausgelegt und lebending erhalten wird (Gerhards 1996: 190).[1]

The biblical text lives in the liturgy. The way in which a canonical Gospel text is read, preached, sung and painted is consequently as significant as the way it is written in the manuscripts. The question is not whether interpreters who identified one of the Marys in Matthew 28:1 with Martha accurately captured the intention of the author of the text or the true historical identity of the women who went to the tomb. It is rather whether the sermons, hymns and images should not be privileged over the canonical texts as a more accurate reflection of the tradition as it was carried in the early Christian communities.

Imagine a pilgrim attending the Easter celebrations in Jerusalem. She hears the canonical text of Matthew 28 read and watches it enacted by two women myrrhophores in the liturgy, but also sings a hymn in which the myrrhophores are identified as Martha and Mary and/or purchases an ampullae on which the myrrhophores are labeled Martha and Mary. What story does this pilgrim hear and carry home with her? Modern interpreters are in the habit of privileging Mary Magdalene in the Easter narrative, an approach that is justified on the basis of her consistent appearance in the canonical texts. The question is whether early Christian pilgrims knew all of the canonical accounts well enough to have noticed this consistency, let alone whether they attached the same significance to it that modern interpreters do. To the contrary, evidence such as the diary of Egeria suggests that, for pilgrims to the Holy City, the pilgrimage and the experience of Easter there embodied the ultimate story. If this story named Martha and Mary, then that is the 'real' Easter story for them. Martha plays a central role in this story, all the more so because of the importance of Bethany as a pilgrim centre and location where the raising of Lazarus was commemorated in the week before Easter, and because the popularity of this narrative in iconography likely raised the Johannine profile of Martha.

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[1] "The interpenetration of Bible and liturgy does not stop with the formation of the canon since the Scriptures are interpreted and kept alive through the liturgy."

Nor need it be imagined that such privileging of liturgy and iconography applies only to the illiterate masses. Severian of Gabala is "erudite in the sacred scriptures and a wonderful preacher of homilies" (so Gennadius, *Catalogue of illustrious men* chap. 21), "learned," according to Sozomen, "and well qualified to teach in the churches" (*HE* 8.10). Yet when Severian recalls the women of the Easter narrative in his sermon, it is Martha and Mary who spring to mind.

Attentiveness to the way the canonical texts were heard in the liturgy can open up new vistas on the shape of the tradition in the life of the churches. In this case it suggests that the tradition of Martha and Mary as myrrhophores is not an unusual aberration but part of the standard version of the Easter story, at least as it was celebrated in Jerusalem and Constantinople. This tradition is invisible when the canonical text is considered in isolation but becomes very visible as an exegesis of Matthew 28 when the text is seen in its liturgical context.

The liturgy has an equally significant impact on the interpretation of the Lukan Martha. For one thing the lectionary, in appending 11:27–28 to the text, creates a narrative with a different climax. This story ends not in a dominical judgment of Martha for failing to choose the good part, but in a dominical blessing on the hearers and doers of the word that could equally include her. Moreover, it was observed that the story appears in the Byzantine lectionary consistently on feast days of the Theotokos. Can one expect that a person who encounters the Gospel stories primarily in the liturgy will distinguish the Mary in this story from Mary Theotokos? Do the creators of such a lectionary even intend her to do so? In this liturgical context Martha is transformed into the sister of Mary Theotokos. This surely must also have some impact on the interpretation of Martha. For one thing, Byzantine Christians, hearing that "standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister" (Jn 19:25), might well have had no trouble identifying the mother's sister.[2] The number and significance of the Marian feasts in the later Byzantine church also suggest that the Lukan story about Martha and Mary might well have assumed an importance in the liturgical life of the church that is belied by its appearance almost 'in passing' within the Lukan narrative itself.

Similarly the raising of Lazarus was celebrated in the week before Easter and became a significant feast within the liturgical calendar of the early Church. I argued in the analysis of the text that the raising of Lazarus functions structurally as a significant turning point in the Gospel of John and, more importantly, that Martha appears as the carrier of the evangelist's theology. The significant place of the pericope within the lectionary suggests an equally significant place for the text in the liturgical life of the Byzantine church. This proves to be a double-edged sword, for as the survey of early Christian exegesis of this text revealed, the interpretation of Martha within the raising of Lazarus was by no means unequivocally positive. Martha is set forth as model of faith (Cyril of Jerusalem; Romanus Melodus) and unfaith (Origen), as Arian heretic (Amphilochius) and as "hospitable like Abraham, loving the poor like Job and Christ-loving in confession like Peter" (Ps. Eustathius).

Of course attention must be paid to the provenance and age of any such liturgical traditions. Liturgical contexts are not, however, a later addition to the canonical text; rather, from the very beginnings the stories were preached and sung (so, for example, Bode 1970, who proposed that the empty tomb stories had a liturgical *Sitz*). They were possibly preached and sung before they were written and read. The shape of preaching and the liturgy changed over the years, but this interpretive context can surely be expected to be just as significant for the earliest communities. The question therefore is not merely what role Martha plays in the canonical texts, but how these stories were told, preached, sung and painted.

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[2] Well beyond the scope of this study, but nevertheless intriguing, are two paintings of Fra Angelico in the monastery of San Marco which depict Martha with Mary Theotokos at the foot of the cross and in the Garden of Gethsemane. Are these also evidence of the impact of the lectionary on the interpretation of Martha?

10.3 MARTHA AS AUTHORITY FIGURE

There has been a great deal of scholarship on women as authority figures in early Christianity. Most of this research has focused on Mary Magdalene, though the significance of some other women, and in particular Salome, has also been recognised (Bauckham 1991; Petersen 1999). While a number of scholars have argued for a significant role for Martha within the canonical texts, and consequently in the earliest communities (in particular Schüssler Fiorenza 1993; D'Angelo 1990b), her role in later texts and in the Christianities of the second and third centuries has received scant attention. While much has been made of Mary Magdalene the apostle, Martha *apostola apostolorum* has remained unknown. The texts which name Martha as resurrection witness and apostle have been known and noted, but her appearance has attracted no attention or its significance been minimalised. If the authority of Mary Magdalene derives largely from her role as key resurrection witness—as scholars such as Schaberg (2002) argue—then the appearance of Martha in this context should also have an effect on her status as authoritative witness.

It appears that this is indeed the case. Martha appears as a key authority in a number of early Christian texts. The *Commentary* of Hippolytus, for example, suggests "Christ himself met [with] the apostles, that the women might be [recognized as] the apostles of Christ" (25.6). Hippolytus sees in the faithfulness of the women the reversal of the fall of Eve. It has been suggested that the Montanists used this exegesis to develop their argument for the ordination of women (Cerrato 1997: 271). Moreover, Martha appears as a key figure in lists of women disciples, usually alongside Mary and Salome. It is not clear on what basis she gains this place; but her role as resurrection witness is a likely source, particularly in view of the fact that she appears in first place in several of the lists. This ordering is consistent with her appearance in the Easter traditions, but strange if she enters the lists of disciples as a consequence of being 'mistaken' for Mary Magdalene's sister, at least if one assumes the primacy of Mary Magdalene which scholarly consensus currently presupposes.

Of course it is also possible that Martha enters the list of apostolic women as a result of her significant place in the Fourth Gospel. It was observed that Martha appears as the carrier of the evangelist's theology in this Gospel, which is itself striking. It suggests not only a significant place for women in the community envisaged by the Gospel, but also implies that Martha held a special place for the evangelist and in the community. Special attention must be drawn to her depiction in the homily of Ps.Eustathius, who not only explicitly compares the confession of Martha with the confession of Peter, but sets her between Peter and John the Evangelist, making her a link in the tradition:

> First Peter confesses in a manner that is God-taught. Second Martha proclaims in a God-initiated manner. Third John theologises on writing tablets in a godly-minded and unique way. (13.151–153)

It is difficult to imagine how one might accord a woman higher status within Christian tradition than to set her thus as a divinely-taught preacher and link in the authoritative tradition passed from Peter to Martha to John. Alongside the apostles and other women disciples of Jesus, such as Mary Magdalene and Salome, Martha thus becomes a foundational figure, whose authority in the Church derives from contact with Jesus during his pre-Easter ministry and from encountering the risen Lord.

This authority of Martha can be used to argue about the place of women in church. The Lukan pericope reveals such an edge when it judges the listening of Mary as 'the good part' while depicting Martha as 'worried' and 'distracted with much serving.' This agenda moves to the foreground in the *Apostolic Church Order* which makes the connection of διακονία to the Eucharist explicit and places some of the arguments for the exclusion of women from this ministry into the mouths of Martha and Mary. The inclusion of Martha and Mary in this discussion of the apostles and the fact that they are given voice suggests that the text might be attempting to co-opt the authority of Martha precisely because Martha traditions could be used to argue for the inclusion of women at the Eucharist. Much as Thecla stories were used to argue for the right of women to teach and baptise, the characteristic connection of Martha to 'serving' could be used to argue for the right of women to serve at the Eucharistic table. The *Acts of Philip* affirm such a role for Martha and it is possible that John 12:2 was likewise interpreted in this way.

It is also worth noting the absence of any rhetoric of chastity in relation to Martha. Matthews (2001a) describes a close link between mission and gender and the close connection of female gender to the polemic of the opponents of Christianity. Conversely, Martha's sexuality does not feature at all in any of the texts which name her. There is no comment on her marital status or her chastity. The texts which are interested in the public perception of Christianity by outsiders use the *topoi* of chastity, virtue, wealth and beauty (Cooper 1996; Matthews 2001a). Conversely, the struggle over authority, particularly of the authority of women, is played out within the confines of the Christian communities using *topoi* such as apostolicity, faithfulness and charismatic inspiration. The Martha traditions belong in this latter rhetorical context. It is her service (διακονία) which is emphasised and praised or criticised, her faithfulness or her lack of faith, and her connection to the risen Lord and to the apostles which comes into view. It is these aspects of Martha—her close connection to διακονία; her authority as an apostolic witness and perhaps also the openness and ambiguity of the canonical Martha narratives—which render her supremely useful for arguing about matters of women and ministry.

10.4 MARTHA FROM THE MARGINS

What has been attempted here is a retrieval of Martha, much as there has been a retrieval of Mary Magdalene as apostle and leader. Just as the retrieval of Mary Magdalene has been a long process in which much has been gained from extended and repeated analysis of the texts, so the retrieval of Martha offered here does not claim to be definitive. It is a gathering of sources and drawing attention to some possible limitations of previous interpretations of the texts. Along the way some alternative hypotheses for the interpretation of the texts have been offered. Yet precisely because the sources derive from diverse fields—spanning vastly diverse geographic areas and six centuries of early Christian tradition, as well as the complex fields of New Testament scholarship, history, liturgy and iconography—and because I am only too aware of the limitations of my own expertise in these fields—it is both my hope and my expectation that others with greater expertise will identify any shortcomings of the interpretations offered here.

Feminist historiography and feminist theology is a search for the lost, a search for what appears at the margins. In the case of Martha, much has remained at the margins, unobserved, its significance overlooked. “We are chickens scratching the remnants of mosaics” says Jane Schaberg (2002: 64) in a memorable phrase. I have scratched at the Martha mosaic; at the texts and images that remain as testimonies to a remarkable tradition. “Hospitable like Abraham, holding open the door of beloved hospitality to all who come,” Martha has been ever the gracious host, even to the modern researcher come to sniff out her trail.

APPENDIX

THE EASTER NARRATIVE IN THE *EPISTULA APOSTOLORUM*

	Ethiopic		*Coptic*
9.1	He of whom we are witnesses we know as the one crucified in the days of Pontius Pilate and of the prince Archelaus, who was crucified between two thieves;	9.1 (I,12)[1]	He concerning whom we bear witness that this is the Lord who was crucified by Pontius Pilate and Archelaus between the two thieves
2	and was taken down from the wood of the cross together with them;		
3	and he was buried in a place which is called the place of the skull,	3 (I,15)	and who was buried in a place called the place of the skull.
4	to which three women came, Sarah, Martha and Mary Magdalene.	4 (II,1)	There went to that place three women: Mary, the daughter of Martha and Mary Magdalene.
5	They carried ointment to pour out upon his body, weeping and mourning over what had happened.	5 (II,3)	They took ointment to pour upon his body, weeping and mourning over what had happened.
6	And they approached the tomb and found the stone where it had been rolled away from the tomb, and they opened the door and did not find his body.	6 (II,5)	But when they had approached the tomb they looked inside and did not find the body.
10.1	And as they were mourning and weeping, the Lord appeared to them and said to them, “Do not weep; I am he whom you seek.	10.1 (II,7)	But as they were mourning and weeping, the Lord appeared to them and said to them, ‘For whom are you weeping? Now do not weep; I am he whom you seek.
2	But let one of you go to your brothers and say to them, ‘Come, our Master has risen from the dead.’ ”	2 (II,10)	But let one of you go to your brothers and say, “Come, the Master has risen from the dead.” ’
3	And Mary came to us and told us.	3 (II,12)	Martha came and told it to us.

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[1] The Coptic text and its translation are numbered by leaf and line in the edition of Schmidt, a citation system which has become customary particularly in German literature. Unfortunately this numbering has not been included by Müller in the *NTA* edition, which makes comparison with secondary literature using this system of citation difficult. For ease of cross-reference, I have therefore provided the numbering system used by Schmidt ([1919] 1967). In each instance the number indicates the page and line number at which the relevant section begins in the Coptic text and translation of Schmidt.

	Ethiopic		*Coptic*
4	And we said to her, ‘What have we to do with you, O woman? He that is dead and buried, can he then live?’	4 (II,12)	We said to her, ‘What do you want with us, O woman? He who has died is buried, and could it be possible for him to live?’
5	And we did not believe her, that our Saviour had risen from the dead.	5 (II,14)	We did not believe her, that the Saviour had risen from the dead.
6	Then she went back to our Lord and said to him, ‘None of them believed me concerning your resurrection.’	6 (III,1)	Then she went back to the Lord and said to him, ‘None of them believed me that you are alive.’
7	And he said to her, Let another one of you go saying this again to them.	7 (III,3)	He said, ‘Let another one of you go to them saying this again to them.’
8	And Sarah came and gave us the same news, and we accused her of lying.	8 (III,4)	Mary came and told us again, and we did not believe her.
9	And she returned to our Lord and spoke to him as Mary had.	9 (III,5)	She returned to the Lord and she also told it to him.
11.1	And then the Lord said to Mary and to her sisters,[2] ‘Let us go to them.’	11.1 (III,6)	Then the Lord said to Mary and also to her sisters, ‘Let us go to them.’
2	And he came and found us veiled. And we doubted and did not believe	2 (III,8)	And he came and found us inside.[3] He called us out.
3	He came before us like a ghost and we did not believe that it was he. But it was he.	3 (III,9)	But we thought it was a ghost, and we did not believe it was the Lord.
4	And thus he said to us, ‘Come and do not be afraid. I am your teacher whom you, Peter, denied three times before the cock crowed; and now do you deny again?’	4 (III,11)	Then he said to us, ‘Come do not be afraid. I am your master whom you, Peter, denied three times; and now do you deny again?’
5	And we went to him, thinking and doubting whether it was he.	5 (III,14)	But we went to him, doubting in our hearts whether it was possibly he.
6	And he said to us, ‘Why do you doubt and why are you not believing that I am he who spoke to you concerning my flesh, my death and my resurrection?’	6 (III,15)	Then he said to us, ‘Why do you still doubt and are you not believing? I am he who spoke to you concerning my flesh, my death and my resurrection?’

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[2] Two Ethiopic MSS have ‘and to Martha’ (Schmidt [1919] 1967: 180 n. 1). Schmidt considers this a scribal emendation in which the scribe did not understand the plural ‘sisters’ and instead of ‘and her sister’ substituted the name ‘Martha’.

[3] Müller (1991: 255) includes ‘inside, veiled’ as part of both the Coptic and Ethiopic versions, however a comparison with Schmidt’s edition ([1919] 1967: 40–41) makes it clear that ‘inside’ occurs only in the Coptic, and ‘veiled’ only in the Ethiopic. Moreover, the majority of the Ethiopic manuscripts read ‘fishing’ rather than ‘veiled’ (on this variant and a possible explanation see further Hills 1990b: 73–76).

	Ethiopic		*Coptic*
7	And that you may know that it is I, lay your hand, Peter, (and your finger) in the nailprint of my hands; and you, Thomas, in my side; and also you, Andrew, see whether my foot steps on the ground and leaves a footprint.	7 (IV,3)	That you may know that it is I, put your finger, Peter, in the nailprints of my hands; and you, Thomas, put your finger in the spear-wounds of my side; but you, Andrew, look at my feet and see if they do not touch the ground.
8	For it is written in the prophet, 'But a ghost, a demon, leaves no print on the ground.'	8 (IV,8)	For it is written in the prophet, 'The foot of a ghost or a demon does not join to the ground.'
12.1	But now we felt him, that he had truly risen in the flesh.	12.1 (IV,10)	But we touched him that we might truly know whether he had risen in the flesh,
2	And then we fell on our faces before him, asked him for pardon and entreated him because we had not believed him.	2 (IV,12)	and we fell on our faces confessing our sin, that we had been unbelieving.
3	Then our Lord and Saviour said to us, 'Stand up and I will reveal to you what is on earth, and what is above heaven, and your resurrection that is in the kingdom of heaven,	3 (IV,14)	Then the Lord our redeemer said, 'Rise up, and I will reveal to you what is above heaven and what is in heaven, and your rest that is in the kingdom of heaven.
4	concerning which my Father has sent me, that I may take up you and those who believe in me.'	4 (V,3)	For my Father has given me the power to take up you and those who believe in me.'

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